University of Alberta

John Muir in Canada:
Canadian influences on the formation of Ecosophy 'M' in Upper Canada (1864-1866) and northwestern British Columbia (1879).

by

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Canada

Abstract

This dissertation addresses the Canadian experiences of John Muir and how these experiences, set within Canadian cultural and natural history, influenced his personal relationship with Nature and evolving ecocentric philosophy. Specifically, this study address the two most lengthy of Muir's experiences in Canada – the two year period in Upper Canada (1864-66) and the two journeys up the Stikine River, in northwestern British Columbia.

This study also address Muir's perennial relevance in environmental philosophy, with a focus on the contemporary debate surrounding environmental pragmatism and moral monism (theory of intrinsic value). Finally, the dissertation addresses Muir's personal eco-philosophy as Ecosophy 'M', where 'M' stands for mountains – wellspring of his ecocentric thought, and how key elements of Ecosophy 'M' anticipate the thought of Deep Ecology philosopher, Arne Naess.

In Memory of Mom,

For Dad

and for

Bill, Ryan and Drew

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To study John Muir, it is wise to walk in his footsteps. I have many to thank in California, Ontario and British Columbia.

The Holt-Atherton Department of Special Collections at the University of the Pacific, Stockton, California, houses the greater part of Muir's papers in the John Muir Collections. During my course of study, Holt-Atherton archivists, Janene Ford, Daryl Morrison and Don Walker were especially helpful. A special thanks also to Mary Lang and Gail Stovall at Holt Memorial Library, who also became good friends. Appreciation also goes to Ronald Limbaugh and Bonnie Gisel at the University of the Pacific who generously shared their knowledge of John Muir. The staff at Yosemite National Park Library are also acknowledged for their help, as is David Blackburn, Chief Interpreter at the John Muir Historic Site in Martinez, CA. I also am grateful for the hospitality of Diana Keith, Sean Keith-Stewart and Mary Lang during my California research and writing period.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Rationale and Significance

A study with a specific focus on John Muir's experiences in Canada and the influence of those experiences upon his life and environmental philosophy has not been written prior to this dissertation. Published biographies of John Muir's life have relied upon autobiographical fragments and a limited set of letters to and from Muir to describe Muir's Canadian experiences in a more or less general way, or to incorporate them into a specific focus of inquiry. William Frederic Badè, the first Muir biographer, compiled an invaluable collection of Muir's letters and autobiographical fragments to provide a foundational reference on Muir's life. Linnie Marsh Wolfe received a Pulitzer Prize for her standard-setting biography of John Muir. Other works addressing Muir's intellectual, spiritual and political life have been written by Frederic Turner, Michael Cohen and Stephen Fox, each providing insights into specific ranges of inquiry.[1]

More recently, an environmental biography by Stephen Holmes has shed light on the psychological foundations of Muir's young life and the development of his environmental thought.[2] Holmes' contribution to Muir scholarship provides deep insight into Muir as a young man, including a section in one chapter on Muir's time in Canada West. Academic inquiry, however, into the historical context and milieu of influences of Muir's Canadian experiences remains abbreviated, relating specific events rather than the historical context and the day-to-day life experiences which contribute in myriad ways to the ontology of a life.

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[1] Standard reference biographies for any Muir study include William Frederic Badè, ed. *The Life and Letters of John Muir*, 2 volumes (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924); Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness: The Life of John Muir* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945); Frederick Turner, *Rediscovering America: John Muir in his time and ours* (New York: Viking Penguin Inc.) 1985; Michael P. Cohen, *The Pathless Way: John Muir and American Wilderness* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984); Stephen Fox, *The American Conservation Movement: John Muir and his Legacy,* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981).

[2] Stephen Holmes, *The Young John Muir: An Environmental Biography*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999).

A plethora of academic theses within the last two decades speak to John Muir's continued and indeed, emerging relevance in the realms of environmental thought and action. Dissertation foci have ranged from discussion of Muir's Christianity, pantheism and environmental philosophy, to the influences of Victorian era romantic literature and Muir's role in American environmental politics.[3] The majority of studies reviewed for the purposes of this project have dealt with Muir's Canadian experiences as either embedded within a specific line of inquiry, or not at all. This study provides a new contribution to Canadian conservation history by addressing Muir's Canadian experiences within the context of a total experiential milieu, in which Canadian social and religious history, culture, landscape and community, as well as work, family and friendship all contribute to Muir's life and thought.

It is apparent through review of the biographies and scholarly studies of John Muir's life that there is a strong American focus to the range of academic inquiry. Muir was and still is considered an American cultural icon; from wilderness mystic to wilderness publicist, he inspired the radical amateur tradition of the preservationist movement and played a foundational role in the establishment of a National Parks system in the United States of America.[4] Muir's contribution to environmental thought and action, however, is not constrained to the United States. Recognition of Muir's foundational ecocentric philosophy, his central role in the beginning of the preservationist movement through the Sierra Club, and his contribution to nature writing transcends national borders.

In addition to a thorough account of Muir's Canadian experiences, this study also contributes a discussion of Muir's proto-ecological thought in the field of environmental ethics. The continuing relevance of Muir's thought and action provides a new perspective on the contemporary debate between environmental pragmatist and ecocentric thought. Further, Muir's relevance as a precursor of contemporary Deep Ecology is also discussed, with a new focus on the key elements of Muir's personal ecological philosophy (ecosophy) that anticipate the tenets of Deep Ecology as articulated by Norwegian philosopher, Arne Naess.

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[3] Dissertations referred to include but are not restricted to: Paul Michael Branch, "The Enlightened Naturalist" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1993); Dennis C. Williams, "The Range of Light, John Muir, Christianity and Nature in the Post Darwinian World" (Ph.D. diss., Texas Tech University, 1992); Daniel G. Payne, "In Sympathy with Nature: American Nature Writing and Environmental Politics, 1620-1920" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York); Gregg W. Wentzell, "Wildness and the American Mind: The Social Construction of Nature in Environmental Romanticism from Thoreau to Dillard" (Ph.D. diss., Miami University, 1993); Albert Brantley Harwell. Jr., "Writing the Wilderness: A Study of Henry Thoreau, John Muir, and Mary Austin" ,(Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 1992); Patricia Anne Roberts, "John Muir and the Hetch-Hetchy Debate: A Study of the Demise of the Sublime in American Policy Rhetoric" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, 1987).

[4] Stephen Fox, *The American Conservation Movement – John Muir and his Legacy.* Fox provides both a biography of Muir and a history of the American conservation movement, with emphasis on the role of the amateur radical which Muir epitomized, and his foundational role in the formation of the Sierra Club as the first radical amateur conservation group in America.

Research Question

Statement of the Question

How did John Muir's Canadian experiences influence his life direction and his evolving ecocentric philosophy?

Clarification of the Research Question

In this study, I address the question of how Muir's Canadian experiences influenced his life, where the term 'influence' is defined as a power, an inspiration and/or effect of something or someone upon the life and thought of John Muir which is perceptible in its effects. It is not possible to quantify influence in this case, for a life is subject to a myriad of influences which permeate and effect the ontology of that life. What is possible, however, is to illustrate how Muir's Canadian experiences and the people he encountered while in Canada made an impression and helped to sway him, to inspire him, to move or touch him in such a way that it made a difference in the life direction he chose and the way that his personal worldview evolved. Canada, with its flowering wilderness, pioneering people and fledgling communities are but a part of the total realm of experience in John Muir's life. My task, therefore, is to neither overstate nor understate the influence that these aspects of Muir's experience had upon his life and thought, but to discuss the nuances of these influences within the context of his life.

In this study, John Muir's Canadian experiences refer to his two lengthiest stays in Canada. Muir's first and longest experience occurred from early March 1864 to early March 1866, when he resided primarily near the pioneer community of Meaford on Georgian Bay, Upper Canada.[5] The second Canadian experience occurred in the summer of 1879, when Muir explored the Stikine River region of northwestern British Columbia.

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[5] For the purposes of this dissertation, I will refer to Muir as being in either Upper Canada, Canada West, or Ontario. Upper Canada is pre-confederation Ontario. Confederation occurred in 1867, a year after

Within the discussion of how John Muir's life unfolded before, during and after his Canadian experiences, I focus not simply on a chronology of events, but seek indications of how these experiences influenced Muir's evolving ecocentric ethic. Ecocentricism may be defined as a belief that the richness and diversity of life forms and natural systems are the base of all organic existence and possess intrinsic value; that humankind is an element within natural systems and is hence dependant upon the intrinsic value of these systems; and that ethical human action necessarily promotes all life on earth and the structures and systems that support them.[6]

Further, Muir's much touted preservationist ideology evidenced by his stalwart advocacy for national parks and wilderness is also discussed. Preservationism is difficult to define. It may refer to an anthropocentric ideology that argues for the preservation of wilderness for the sake of humankind, claiming that future generations be allowed to enjoy wilderness values, but may also spring from recognition that wilderness has intrinsic value and should be left alone for its own sake. This dichotomy is addressed with a discussion of how Muir used preservationism as a pragmatic and strategic tool in his goal to protect parks and wilderness areas.

Muir's Canadian experiences contributed to the formation of the tenets of Muir's personal ecocentric philosophy in very interesting and profound ways. This study will outline these influences, how they shaped Muir's life direction, and his personal worldview. The Canadian story of John Muir is instructional, and an interesting part of Canadian conservation history.

Research Objectives

This research project contains several objectives that provide an original contemplation of a unique aspect of Canadian environmental history. As a foundation, a historically accurate chronological narrative of John Muir's life and experiences in both Ontario and the Stikine River region of northwestern British

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Muir departed from Canada. Correspondence to and from Muir during this period used the designation 'Canada West.'

[6] Max Oeschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 294.

Columbia is undertaken. From this baseline, it is then possible to interpret how each of these two Canadian experiences contributed to the emergence and evolution of John Muir's ecocentric thought and his use of preservationist strategy. Further, it is also possible to interpret how Muir's Canadian experiences also helped set his life direction, with attention paid to the contexts of family, community, vocation and avocation.

In addition to the objectives that relate to an academic biography of John Muir in Canada is a discussion stemming from a contemporary debate in environmental philosophy. From the example set by Muir, it is possible to add further discussion points to the contemporary rift between two schools of thought – ecocentrists (moral monists who adhere to the metaphysical foundation of intrinsic value in nature) and environmental pragmatists (who reject moral monism and advocate practical, workable solutions to current environmental issues regardless of metaphysical foundations). Muir's personal experiences with this very debate are instructional in the attempts to find innovative, workable ways to safeguard wildness, biodiversity and fully functioning, healthy ecosystems.

Limitations in Research Methodology

This research project does not address the entire life of John Muir, rather, it focuses on the aspects of Muir's life that were influenced by his experiences in Canada. Further, the project does not address all of Muir's Canadian travels, only the two lengthiest experiences he had in this country. His travels to Canada with the Forestry Commission in 1897, and the quick tour into Quebec in the fall of 1898 are not covered by this study.

Although encompassing both biography and historiography, this research project is not a psycho-biography. To further explain the difference between historical biography and psycho-biography, Robert Craig Brown wrote:

> In Canadian historiography, however, few biographers have been tempted to use the methodology of psychobiography, perhaps in implicit recognition that the adoption of this particular technique to discover the interior life of a subject more often than not threatens to wrest the subject out of his or her historical context. That, in turn, widens the gap between the objectives of the biographer and the historian.[7]

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[7] Robert Craig Brown, "Biography in Canadian History" in *Clio's Craft: A Primer of Historical Methods*, Terry Crowley ed., (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1988), 160.

The subtle use of psychological insight may be helpful to the biographer; however, this approach is minimized to adhere to the methodologies of historiography and historical biography.

Limitations exist in the volume of primary and secondary historical evidence regarding Muir's 1863-66 Ontario sojourn. Whether Muir kept journals during this time is not known. If such materials did exist, they may have been consumed in the Trout Mill fire, or simply lost. My view is that there were no journals of Muir's Ontario experience per se, for Muir never mentioned their existence in later autobiographical reminiscences or within the period letters to family and friends. Further, John Muir and the Trout family members lived in a cabin separate from the mill, and it is more likely that journals and letters would have been stored in Muir's upstairs cabin bedroom. The cabin remained standing after the mill fire, and letters to Muir during that period were retained and are now included within the *John Muir Papers*.

Limitations exist in primary and secondary evidence of Muir's Stikine River trips of 1879. Although field journals exist and Muir's book, Travels in Alaska, address these experiences in some depth, there were limitations with the extent and content of the data. Muir wrote and later rewrote many of his observations and feelings regarding a particular experience. At times, the rewriting (as in the case of Travels in Alaska) occurred decades after the actual experience and were therefore viewed through the lens of long life, experience and shifts in perspective. The true feelings and reactions of the subject at the time of the experience required a careful assessment of primary documentation. Many of Muir's published works did not give the true "at that time" nuances available in his field journals. Consequently, I relied on Muir's actual field journals in recounting the Stikine River experiences, for they are the most immediate of the available primary evidence.

Even with this taken into account, it is important to note that Muir had his own way of note-taking in the journals that present certain problems of ascertaining the immediacy of feeling or reaction to experience. For example, in close perusal of Muir's field journals, I realized that Muir relied upon visual cues to bring back details and nuances of experiences. Muir made detailed landscape sketches, including close study of a copse of trees, waterfalls in steep ravines, and glaciers in high mountain valleys. This was followed, sometimes days later, by his filling in the borders around the sketches with written notes. Quite often, the notes had no connection with the subject of the sketch. This presented some difficulty in ascertaining

Muir's immediate feelings and observations at that time, so I had to rely more on the contents of what he sketched, for this signaled his immediate visceral reaction to what he was experiencing. The written notes helped to clarify specific observations of a more scientific nature, the sketches provided the stimulus for aesthetic or emotional memory. The process of sketching allowed time to soak up the entire gestalt experience of that moment - looking at the sketch later could well have been used as the impetus to spark memory and bring Muir back to that very moment. If this is what Muir used the sketches for, he would have had a very powerful tool for writing, even after a significant amount of time had elapsed.

Within the scope of this research project there is a no discussion of Muir's "true" religious faith. Many scholars have debated whether Muir is Christian, Pantheist, Taoist, Buddhist or Pagan, and although I have my own personal opinions regarding this question, lack of concrete theological knowledge necessarily precludes any of this discussion within the context of this study.[8] The discussion in this research project will be limited to how religion as one element of Muir's experience through family, friends and community in Ontario, influenced his worldview and life direction.

This research project is also limited to a specific range of discussion within environmental philosophy. It presents elements of Muir's personal proto-ecological philosophy and how these elements were influenced by Muir's life experiences in Canada. It is further limited to a discussion of the applicability of Muir's thought within a contemporary debate between environmental pragmatism and ecocentric philosophies. It is understood that the evolution of any personal philosophy is the result of a person's full life experiences, thoughts and emotions, and to that end this project recognizes the foundational importance of Muir's entire life, including his youth in Scotland and Wisconsin, the 1000 mile walk to the Gulf of Mexico and the critical years he spent in Yosemite.

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[8] Several academic papers, published biographies and completed Ph.D. dissertations address this question. These include works by R. Limbaugh, D. Williams, M. Cohen, S. Fox and the first Muir biographers, Linnie Marsh Wolfe and W.F. Badè.

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organized into four chapters and a conclusion. Each chapter provides biographical and philosophical context for succeeding chapters.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction, orienting the reader to the research question and proposition, the rationale and significance of the study, the objectives of the study and the methodologies used. It addresses the research design including four stages of research, and the sources of information and experience. Further, it outlines inherent assumptions, limitations, and tests of research quality, and lays out the organization of the dissertation.

Chapter 2 provides a description of the importance of John Muir's environmental thought and its continuing relevance to contemporary environmental philosophy. It also advances a discussion of how Muir's thought and action remains pertinent to contemporary debates within environmental ethics, with a focus on theoretical and practical applications of environmental pragmatism versus ecocentric thought. This chapter also provides an outline of specific elements of Muir's personal ecological philosophy, 'Ecosophy 'M', and how these elements foreshadow important elements of Deep Ecology derived by Norwegian philosopher, Arne Naess.

Chapter 3 lays the foundation of Muir's life in Upper Canada through a chronology of events, including a description of who he was when he arrived, the stresses and changes that he experienced at this time, and the role the Trout family, Trout Hollow, and the natural environs of the Georgian Bay area had upon his personal worldview and life direction. This chapter also provides an interpretation of how Muir's experiences in Canadian wilderness and within the cultural and religious context of life in Upper Canada contributed to the evolution of his worldview and life direction.

Chapter 4 lays the chronological foundation of Muir's two trips up the Stikine River into northwestern British Columbia, with contributions of natural and cultural history related to the Stikine River region. By the time Muir ventured up the Stikine River in the summer of 1879, his overall worldview had evolved. This chapter addresses how his experiences in the Stikine River region augmented his glacial studies, and contributed to Muir's ever expanding vision of cosmological wholeness through the his study of landscape formation.

A short conclusion address the primary question of the dissertation: of how Muir's Canadian experiences contributed to his life direction and the evolution of his ecocentric thought, and how and why Muir's life and thought remains relevant today within contemporary environmental ethics.

Methodology and Research Design

Methodology

> Living with ambiguity is a central feature of life history research and there is no easy way to plan it.[9]

This study contemplates the life of one person in the multiple contexts of life history. These contexts include but are not restricted to community, relationships, literature, spirituality, science, and personal 'on the ground' experience. Accordingly, this historical research project has proven to be an exciting and unfolding process that does not readily allow definition by any one 'hard' methodology. Rather, it requires interdisciplinary exploration through biography, historiography, and ecophilosophy.

Biography

> His search for truth in life, then, is the biographer's preeminent standard, and his own response to that truth shapes that art. How far he probes, what he chooses to reveal is determined not by his subject's sensibilities, but by the personal instincts and affinities that lead him to take hold.[10]

Primarily, this research project engaged the art of biography, "the telling of a life." Traditionally, historical biography has provided character sketches to enliven historical narrative, but more recently, it has been increasingly recognized as a "...distinct and special brand of historical writing."[11] Biography's main task is to attempt to comprehend and retell the life of its subject, including all aspects of that person's life.

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[9] Ken Plummer, *Documents of Life: An Introduction to the Problems and Literature of a Humanistic Method*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), 90.

[10] Pachter, Marc, ed., *Telling Lives: The Biographer's Art* (Washington D.C: New Republic, 1979)

[11] Robert Craig Brown, "Biography in Canadian History" in *Clio's Craft: A Primer of Historical Methods* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1988), 155.

> The biographer's subject lived in a society, interacted with other persons and with groups, was influenced by and may well have influenced, in turn, private and public institutions, participated as a producer and a consumer in an economic system, shared or rebelled against the cultural and political norms of this society. It is in this context, as an actor in the historical process, that the biographer's subject assumes significance for the historian.[12]

Through the art of biography, the historian is able to discern basic patterns in a life, to find correlation and meaning in events, and to find and support the threads of underlying trends within the subject's life that shape the historical process. The biographer's interpretation of the subject's life must be supported by the primary and secondary evidence embedded in the chronological narrative, and "will need as much luck and insight as evidence to grasp the bits of truth that are revealed in the accessible aspects of their subject's lives."[13]

To this end, within the chapters devoted to Muir's time in Canada, chronological narrative provides the foundation from which the trends and nuances of John Muir's life are interpreted. Specifically, interpretation is derived from the context of Muir's life at that time; the principal life turnings and conditions between these turnings; and Muir's characteristic means of adaptation to circumstances at that time.[14]

Historiography

> Historical time lines can be quite illuminating and do have their place. They are, however, passive and somewhat lackluster and lifeless. Historiography, on the other hand, attempts to fashion a descriptive written account of the past. Such a narrative account is flowing, revealing, vibrant and alive![15]

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[12] Ibid., 160.

[13] Ibid.

[14] David G. Mendelbaum, "The Study of Life History" in *Field Research: a Sourcebook and Field Manual* Robert G. Burgess, ed. (London: Routledge, 1991), 148.

[15] Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences,* 2d ed., (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1995), 161.

Historiography is “a tradition of historical writing whose subject-matter has the rifts and nuances of historical interpretation."[16] It is a method of historical interpretation that requires an interdisciplinary approach that brings primary historical evidence to a hermeneutic distillation. It involves long hours of close encounter with primary evidence and an acknowledgment that ideas borne from such immersion bring about a writing of history that sheds new light on how we see the past and our relationship to it.

Environmental Philosophy

The concepts of ecocentricism and preservationism comprise only two schools of thought within the realm of environmental philosophy. As philosophical constructs, both ecocentricism and preservationism played important roles in Muir's philosophy, and permeated his writings, political activism and personal life.

Within this study, a discussion of the elements of ecocentricism, utilizing both Callicottian ecocentricism as well as the tenets of Deep Ecology as derived by Arne Naess, provide a basis for interpretation of Muir’s personal proto-ecological worldview.[17] The tenets of contemporary environmental pragmatism are also brought into discussion, with specific attention to the position of Bryan Norton and fellow environmental pragmatists in their advocacy of moral pluralism within environmental ethics.[18]

Within the chapters addressing Muir’s experiences in Canada, a discussion of how these experiences contributed to Muir’s evolving philosophical worldview and influenced his life direction draws from the discussion of Muir’s personal ecosophy in Chapter II.

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[16] A.B. McKillop, "Historiography and Intellectual History" in *Clio's Craft: A Primer in Historical Research Methods* , Terry Crowley, ed. (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1988), 79.

[17] For the purposes of this research project, the writings of Leopoldian ecocentric philosopher, J. Baird Callicott, play a large part in the debate regarding environmental pragmatism. The position and writings of Deep Ecology philosopher, Arne Naess, are also foundational to the interpretation of Muir’s personal proto ecological philosophy, Ecosophy ‘M’, as discussed at length in Chapter 2.

[18] Although the contemporary debate between environmental pragmatists and those who adhere to ecocentricism is clarified in Chapter 2, for the purposes of this introductory chapter this discussion may be followed through the following references: Andrew Light & Eric Katz, eds., *Environmental Pragmatism* (New York: Routledge, 1996); J. Baird Callicott, *Beyond the Land Ethic: More Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (New York: State University of New York, 1999); Bryan G. Norton, “Conservation and Preservation: A Conceptual Rehabilitation” in the *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, 8, (1986): 195; J. Baird Callicott, *In Defence of the Land Ethic* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989).

Stages of Research

This research project initially arose through discussion with Dr. James R. Butler, at that time a professor at the Department of Renewable Resources, University of Alberta. Muir's Canadian experiences were not well known within the context of Canadian environmental history. Consequently, this study was developed to provide a uniquely Canadian perspective; weaving local and social history, natural history, wilderness exploration, and environmental philosophy through three stages of research.

Phase 1

After deciding to study John Muir in Canada, I reviewed Muir-related literature. A proliferation of studies from a recent revival of interest in Muir provided a wide selection of material. Scholars, amateur historians, interest groups, journalists, Muir friends and relations, and, of course, John Muir himself, contributed to an eclectic mix of material. A complex picture developed of Muir and his work. But more importantly for the purposes of this study, the lack of a thorough historical study on Muir's experiences in Canada and the influences that Canada made on his worldview and life direction became apparent. From this initial review, the outline of a Canadian perspective on Muir's life emerged, with concentration on two separate time frames of Muir's Canadian experience.

Phase 2

After the preliminary review of literature, I began to collect and review primary historical evidence on Muir's life. Field research was essential because many original Muir materials were unavailable though the library system. Therefore, it was necessary to go to sources of primary evidence of Muir's life and work. While documentary evidence of John Muir's life was essential, it was also important to experience the rivers, mountains, glaciers, communities and homes he knew so well.

Phase 3

The need to establish events, thoughts and observations of the subject at the time of occurrence is critical to the integrity of this study. Interpretation of these events in relation to the concepts of environmental philosophy and life direction absolutely requires a thoroughly researched and supported chronology. The art of writing biography and intellectual historiography requires no less.

Phase 3 of the research process included assessing the historical data to determine whether it was primary or secondary evidence, establishing systems of recording and storing the data in easily retrievable form, and creating thematic notebooks including reference to sources. The system I developed was uniquely adapted to the particular needs of this research project.

Due to the amount of primary and secondary sources required for this project, and the distance I live from these sources, the bulk of primary and secondary data was photocopied for the sole purpose of this project. All documentary evidence was sorted into chronological and/or thematic groups. Letters between Muir and friends and family were bound chronologically. Muir articles, including newspaper articles written by Muir as well as others, plus secondary and primary articles written on Muir were sorted and bound thematically. In each binder I created a table of contents to facilitate easy reference, and to provide easy cross referencing for specific documents. Further, after reading each document I made notes on content, including references and quotes. I then organized thematically these materials into notebooks according to the chapter structure of the dissertation. All in all, this was a time-consuming part of the research project but reaped benefits for organization and interpretation efficiency during the life of the project.

Phase 4

The final stage of the research process involved the writing of the text of the dissertation, and subsequent revisions of editing errors and any required clarification of interpretation. A chronological approach was used within the chapters addressing Muir's time in Canada, and a historiographical methodology was used to weave interpretation of Muir's personal thought and action into the context of the Canadian experiences. For the writer of historical biography, this is where the art of telling a life, true to the subject, is the most difficult. Constant attention to researcher bias and to the reliability and validity of data, being honest regarding the lack of supportive documentation in certain sections, and balancing factual evidence with the need to 'breathe life' into an accounting of Muir's life in Canada were all part of this stage in the study.

Sources of Information and Experience

The research design required a thorough collection/review of all relevant primary evidence from six different Muir sources in the United States and Canada. In California, the Holt Atherton Archives at the University of the Pacific, Stockton; the John Muir Historic Site in Martinez; and Yosemite National Park all provided essential primary documents and a powerful introduction to Muir's home places. In Canada, the Stikine River and Cassiar Gold Rush region; the British Columbia Archives in Victoria; the community of Meaford, Ontario; the peaceful dale of Trout Hollow (still relatively undisturbed); and the Georgian Bay area of Ontario provided not only essential information, but unforgettable experiences immersed in the beauty of wild Canada. This component of my project is integral to sound qualitative research:

> Qualitative researchers go to the particular setting under study because they are concerned with context...To divorce the act, word, or gesture from its context is, for the qualitative researcher, to lose sight of significance...qualitative researchers assume that human behavior is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs, and whenever possible, they go to that location.[19]

Stikine River region - northwestern British Columbia

My first field-research foray was to the Stikine River region in the northwestern British Columbia. Muir explored this region in 1879, and I wanted to experience directly the places he visited, gaining an understanding of the area's history and the physical and aesthetic nature of his experiences. It is fortunate that my parents lived in the small community of Dease Lake at that time, and were well acquainted with the entire region. With their help, we traced sections of the old Cassiar Gold Rush trail that Muir travelled, and visited the still existent sites of "Caribou Camp," "Wilson's," and "Wards" that Muir described in his 1879 field journal.

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[19] Robert C. Bogdan and Sari Knopp Biklen, *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods* , 2d ed. (Boston: Allyn And Bacon,1992), 30.

Today, Telegraph Creek is a picturesque village on the banks of the Stikine River, with a predominantly Tahltan population.[20] After visiting the original buildings in Telegraph Creek that date back to 1879, and the fish camp that Muir described at the confluence of the Tahltan and Stikine Rivers, we moved down-river from Telegraph Creek to the ghost town of Glenora. A graveyard, a disintegrating cabin, and the first 500 metres of a short-lived railroad scheme are all that remain of this bustling gold rush town. Rising behind the town site, Glenora Mountain provides an invitation too potent to ignore. My father and I attempted to climb the mountain, following the probable route that Muir and Samuel Hall Young took in 1879. We managed to climb over half of the 6500 foot elevation gain before an early fall snowstorm ended our hopes of reaching the summit.

In the village of Dease Lake, my mother arranged interviews with local Tahltan elders who provided insights in the route of the Cassiar Gold Rush Trail. The Dease Lake Elementary School provided a compilation of material bound as the *"History of the Cassiar from 1831 to 1866: The Beginning of the Fur Trade Industry in the Cassiar"* by Georgianna Ball of Ball Research, Victoria. This compilation provided an invaluable understanding of the history of the Tahltan people and the Stikine River gold rush era. I was fortunate to have a telephone discussion with Ms. Georgianna Ball, a historian knowledgeable about the Stikine region, which proved helpful in gaining further insight into the historical chronology of the area.

British Columbia Archives, Victoria, B.C.

The British Columbia Provincial Archives provided historical evidence regarding the history of the Stikine River region and the Gold Rush eras of northwestern British Columbia. My search in the Archives for primary and secondary materials provided greater understanding and information on the paddle wheelers that plied the Stikine River; maps of the historic Cassiar Gold Rush Trail from Telegraph Creek Centreville and McDame Post in the Cassiar Gold Fields; references to the Tahltan people; information on the Cassiar Gold Fields and the gold rush era villages of Glenora and Telegraph Creek, British Columbia.

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[20] For a more indepth look at the Tahltan people, refer to Sylvia L Albright, "Tahltan Ethnoarchaeology" (Vancouver: Department of Archaeology, Simon Fraser University, 1984), Publication Number 15.

California, U.S.A

The most significant field-research trip to gather primary historical materials was to the Holt Atherton Department of Special Collections at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California. The Holt Atherton Archives holds the greater extent of original John Muir manuscripts and related papers. At the time of this field trip, the Microfilm Edition of the *John Muir Papers* was available in Alberta for only a limited time through interlibrary loan, with no photo-copying privileges allowed. This policy created significant difficulty for long term study. Further, the Holt Atherton Archives held many unpublished and otherwise inaccessible Muir documents that required review. During my initial stay at the University of the Pacific, I engaged in a thorough study of the original Muir field journals and notebooks. Since this first field-research trip, the University of Alberta Library has purchased the Microfilm Edition of the *John Muir Papers*, providing open access to primary and secondary data sources through the Cameron Library. The subsequent ease of access to primary documents within my own University has been a tremendous help to this research project.[21]

During the initial field-research trip to California, I also visited the John Muir Historic Site in Martinez. The spacious Victorian mansion was built in 1882 by noted horticulturist Dr. John Theophile Strentzel, whose only surviving child, Louisa Wanda Strentzel, married John Muir in 1880. Muir lived with his wife on the ranch, eventually settling into the mansion upon the death of Dr. Strentzel, and lived there for the remainder of his life. The United States National Park Service made the site into a National Historic Site, restoring the home and a portion of the original surrounding fruit ranch. The Historic Site offers a glimpse into the dichotomy of Muir's life: on one level living in Victorian affluence with his wife and two daughters, on the other level requiring wilderness immersion through protracted expeditions or short excursions.

The most thought-provoking aspect of the California field research trip was my visit to Yosemite National Park. Although I found no primary evidence at the Yosemite National Park Library that specifically addressed my research, I did find secondary materials that added value to the interpretive process of this project. In addition to searching for archival data, I visited two places while in Yosemite

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[21] Recognition and thanks are extended to Dr. J.R. Butler and Dr. Ross Chapman for their invaluable help in bringing the Microform Edition of the *John Muir Papers* to the University of Alberta.

National Park that were unforgettable: the rim above Yosemite Falls, and Hetch-Hetchy Valley. A day trip up the switch-back trail to the rim of the Yosemite Valley provided a dizzying peek over the lip of Yosemite Falls and an introduction to the smooth glacier-burnished granite that Muir loved so much. I caught some essence of the power of the valley and began to understand the ecstatic connection Muir felt with wild nature during his first Yosemite years. Present day tourist congestion and the constant threat of being loved to death notwithstanding, the profound beauty and spiritual power of Yosemite is deeply felt.

The second aspect of Yosemite I experienced was no less powerful, and to my mind, a necessity for any Muir scholar. I visited the Hetch-Hetchy Valley. Standing on the vast concrete dam in a deepening dusk, I could not detect any living thing nor feel the living power so tangible in Yosemite. Dammed and drowned to provide water to San Francisco despite all the passionate arguments Muir summoned to stop the project, the Hetch-Hetchy Valley is a symbol of the birth of preservationism and the radical amateur tradition in environmental activism. Current debate still wages as to whether the damn should be dismantled. I am hopeful that within my lifetime I will have the opportunity to join the many people who have continually fought to bring back Hetch-Hetchy, and turn around Muir's defeat.

Finally, during the writing stage of the dissertation, I made another trip to the Holt Atherton Archives in order to locate specific documents missed in the original field-research trip. These documents were needed to answer the questions that invariably come up during the final writing of the dissertation manuscript.

Meaford, Owen Sound and the Bruce Peninsula, Ontario

An important section of this research project addresses the time that John Muir spent in Ontario; therefore, it was critical to complete field-research in the Meaford and Georgian Bay area of Ontario. This field-research trip was undertaken to gain an understanding of the historical context of Muir's two-year sojourn in the Georgian Bay region of Ontario, and was made possible by the Lichen Foundation, who generously provided the means to accomplish this research.

"The Canadian Friends of John Muir," a committed and enthusiastic group of people from the Meaford and Owen Sound area invited Dr. Jim Butler and I to participate in a week of Muir activities and presentations. Due to this group's conservation and public education efforts, Muir has gained a higher profile not only within Ontario, but with Muir enthusiasts in the United States and Scotland.[22] The Canadian Friends of John Muir have become an integral part of this research project, providing local historical expertise, suggesting where to find relevant data, and debating the most puzzling aspects of Muir's Ontario wanderings and Trout Hollow days. Much of the initial research for the Ontario section has truly been a collaborative effort.

During the Ontario research trip, a special opportunity to experience the natural diversity and beauty of the Bruce Peninsula was provided and sponsored by the Lichen Foundation. Resident fern expert Nels Maher and his wife Jean led a naturalist tour of the Bruce Peninsula and Owen Sound environs. The tour included a special day outing to Flower Pot Island, highlighted by finding Calypso orchids in full bloom. During the tour, we also met with staff members at Fathom Five Provincial Park to review possible routes Muir may have taken in the north Bruce Peninsula area. The naturalist tour of the Bruce Peninsula underscored a deep appreciation of what Muir experienced in the sheer complexity of fern species, the beauty of the unique alvar ecosystem and diversity of the southern Ontario landscape.

Tests of Research Quality

Presence of the Researcher

This study is a personal path of discovery: a walk in wildflowers and over intense blue crevasses of glaciers. It serves as an anchor to view the crisis of environmental degradation, the fallibility of current economic paradigms, the intentions and problems of preservationism and the philosophical and practical difficulties of realizing ecocentricism both personally and socially. It unveils the power of advocacy and the inspiration of great thinkers and activists. It empowers my personal work to ensure that nature and children thrive in a healthy and secure future. The study is also subject to my personal bias and the impossibility of completely separating the research process and outcome from the values, attitudes and social context of my life.

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[22] For further information regarding the 'Canadian Friends of John Muir' visit their website at www.johnmuir.org.

As a biographer I am forced to select from the masses of primary materials the foundations for valid and reliable interpretation, and to do this with as much objectivity as possible.

> [A biographer]...must perform a balancing act...must keep the balance between objectivity and personal engagement, between reliance on documentary evidence (letter, journals, and memoirs) and intuitive re-creation, between the subject's under-documented childhood and his/her well-monitored but perhaps tedious years of elderly distinction.[23]

One consideration within this study, especially with a subject of great charisma, is recognition that attachment, veneration, even love of the subject may create problems. Although detachment from the subject may produce a work with a solid foundation on primary evidence, my challenge as a biographer is twofold. I must utilize both empirical data and intuitive interpretation and walk that thin wavering line between complete immersion and identification with the subject, and that of careful attention and adherence to the primary evidence of the life. The finished work after such a tightrope walk has the nuances of an interpretive narrative supported by reliable and valid evidence. It breathes of the life and offers insights not otherwise possible. I strove to accomplish this tightrope walk without a major spill.

I admire Muir and what he accomplished. He serves as a role model and mentor in many of my personal endeavors as a bioregional activist. Within this dissertation, the question of how Muir worked, or did not work as an environmental pragmatist has been instructional with my work on a community creek restoration project. Muir's ability to retain the integrity of his vision of nature under adverse circumstances and a multiplicity of values and views provides lessons for us all.

As a historiographer using biography as a tool, I also recognize that personal views and ideas about the subject are part of this research project. The recognition of the presence of the researcher is part of the process of not only the writing of interpretation, but in the establishment of the research question, the process of field research and the gathering of data, and the sorting, compiling and selection of data to be used in the project.[24]

Finally, biographical subjects who have historically been tied to great historical causes or movements may become symbols of those causes, taking on iconic proportions. In this, they tend to lose much of the concrete and very human aspects of their character and life to society. In this study I take care to adhere to the very human character and actions of Muir, and recognize that history is created by living men and women, with personal strengths and weaknesses. Muir was as human as the rest of us.

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[23] John Batchelor, ed., "Introduction" in *The Art of Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 5-6.

[24] Kjell Erik Rudestam and Rae R. Newton, *Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide on Content and Process* (London: Sage Publication, 1992), 38; Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research* (Belmount, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1986), 10-16.

Bias

> To purge research of all these "sources of bias" is to purge research of human life. It presumes a "real" truth may be obtained once all these biases have been removed. Yet to do this, the ideal situation would involve a researcher without a face to give off feelings, a subject with a clear and total knowledge unshaped by the situation, a neutral setting, and so forth. Any "truth" found in such a disembodied neutralized context must be a very odd one indeed. It is precisely through these "sources of bias" that a "truth" comes to be assembled. The task of the researcher, therefore, is not to nullify these variables, but to be aware of, describe publicly and suggest how these have assembled a specific "truth".[25]

Sources of bias come from three different sources within the scope of this research project.

The first source of bias is with the subject himself. During the task of becoming very familiar with primary documentary evidence, I was struck with some discrepancies as to chronological order of events between the field notes and journals and final published books. As mentioned previously in research limitations, this discrepancy begs the question of to what extent the subject changed original field journals to fit the requirements of literary prose in his final published works. An example of this point is Muir's reference to the Calypso orchid in his book Travels in Alaska; however, he did not name the orchid in his field journal, simply calling it "a purple orchid new to me".[26] Surely Muir would recognize the Calypso orchid during his exploration of the Stikine River and its glaciers, but he does not refer to it by name until many years later. A small point perhaps, but some bias from the subject must therefore be kept in mind in using primary evidence for this research project, and alleviated by careful attention and cross-checking of primary and secondary evidence.

The second source of bias comes from the researcher. As I have outlined previously in "Presence of the Researcher", I come to the project with my own values, attitudes, expectations and worldview. I am conscious of "reading" into Muir's work my own perceptions and expectations of meaning. This said, however, I also recognize that the process of interpretation around a fundamental idea, which is the methodology of historiography, necessarily requires that the researcher bring his or her views into the process. This is the art of biography and historiography, but must always be checked against the primary and secondary historical resources that are brought to light during the research process.

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[25] Ken Plummer, "The Doing of Life Histories" in *Documents of Life: An Introduction to the Problems and Literature of a Humanistic Method* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), 103-104.

[26] *John Muir Papers Microfilm Edition*, Ronald H. Limbaugh and Kirsten E. Lewis, eds., (Virginia: Chadwyck-Healey Inc., 1986), Series II, AMS Journal 73, "From Wrangell Up Stickeen 2d Trip to Cassiar Mines", 64.

Finally, the third source of bias comes from the interaction between the researcher and the subject. In my role of sorting and sifting through copious amounts of documents, letters, articles, reminiscences, books, dissertations and autobiographical fragments, I have imposed upon the evidence a choice of not only what is relevant to this project, but the degree of relevancy to the central tenets of the research question. This is not without bias, and contains a subjective element that is impossible to exclude completely. However, by implicitly selecting historical primary evidence and verifiable secondary sources that are both externally and internally valid, personal bias is reduced to acceptable levels.

Reliability

Reliability is a test of research quality that ensures that the study could be replicated by another researcher using the same data and reaching the same conclusions.

Reliability in this case must rest upon the adherence to the use of primary sources in the form of Muir's personal letters, field journals, published articles, books, notes, photographs, and autobiographical fragments. I expect that given this same set of historical evidence, an identical chronology of Muir's life history would result. Although an identical interpretation of these life events would not be possible, simply because each researcher is an individual with unique perspectives of the research question, I expect that future researchers on Muir will be able to follow my logic of interpretation from the referenced evidence I present.

Validity

Ensuring validity in a historical research study requires an assessment of the authenticity of primary, secondary and other data sources. Assessing historical data with a focus on both external and internal evidence is important to ensure the integrity of the study.

External evidence determines whether the historical data is truly authentic, specifically, whether the primary data is genuine. For example, the researcher must be able to determine if a letter is a genuine document to or from the subject, of if the field journal is truly written by the subject at the time and remains unedited or changed in any way by others. To this end, I collected and carefully screened historical evidence, adhering to primary documents in Muir's own hand, published books and articles by Muir, documents by people who were either family members, close friends, or important acquaintances within the context of Muir's life at that time. In setting historical context of the time, I adhered to diaries, maps, newspaper articles, and regional histories of that time.

Internal evidence determines whether the meaning, the intent and context of the primary or secondary evidence may be ascertained correctly. The determination of internal evidence is difficult, for it does in part rely upon the researcher's ability to mesh the context of the evidence with what was going on at that time. The difficulty partly comes from a lack of complete knowledge of all events, and from some elements of researcher bias as already defined above.

In determining the internal evidence of Muir's letters and journals and other related data sources, I had to gain an understanding of the context of Muir's life which included relationships, science, emotion, personal intent, and events of that time. This required immersion in a wide variety of primary and secondary documentary evidence. For example, to understand the context of what Muir experienced in Ontario, I delved into diaries, newspapers, letters, published local histories, railroad and boat schedules, geography texts, fern and flower handbooks, maps, family chronicles, and church histories. From this myriad of sources emerged an interpretation of what John Muir's life entailed at that time and a greater understanding of his actions. Although my interpretation is my own, it is supported by the internal validity of evidence apparent in the range and quality of the primary documentation.

The final check on validity was through the use of a convergent validation, or the process of triangulation. As noted above, multiple elements of historical research data were used which provided multiple lines of sight at the subject.[27] Further, peer review of the dissertation by historians with expertise in a specific locale (Ontario) helped to address the question of internal and external validity.

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[27] For discussion of the research validation process of triangulation refer to Kjell Erik Rudestam and Rae R. Newton, *Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process* (London: Sage

CHAPTER 2

Muir and Ecosophy "M" – Mysticism and Practicality

> If my soul could get away from this so-called prison, be granted all the list of attributes generally bestowed on spirits, my first ramble on spirit wings would not be among the volcanoes of the moon. Nor should I follow the sunbeams to their sources in the sun. I should hover about the beauty of our own good star. I should not go moping among the tombs, nor around the artificial desolation of men. I should study Nature's laws in all their crossing and unions; I should follow magnetic streams to their source, like warped and crinkled strips of silver. The falls in glorious dress and voice.[28]

> There is not a fragment in all nature, for every relative fragment of one thing is a full harmonious unit in itself.[29]

Introduction

John Muir, though made, is yet being made.[30] Muir would have understood the foundational element of this observation, for his life, though 'made' at any point, was also in a constant state of experience, learning, reflection and expansion of thought. "I am only a baby slowly learning my mountain alphabet", he wrote to a friend, seeing himself as a perpetual student of the wild, learning from the primer of the great Book of Nature.[31] Later, with a more mature perspective of the influences of the wild upon his life he would write "…We are governed more than we know, and most when we are wildest."[32]

Publications, 1992), 38-39; Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1995), 4-6.

[28] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, ed. *John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1938), 43-44.

[29] John Muir, "A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf" in *John Muir: The Eight Wilderness-Discovery Books,* (Seattle: The Mountaineers, 1992), 168. Please note: further reference to *John Muir: The Eight Wilderness Discovery Books* will use the abbreviation *EWDB.*

[30] "…One learns that the world, though made, is yet being made" in *John Muir in His Own Words*, Peter Browning, ed. (Lafayette, CA: Great West Books, 1988), 40. Muir was speaking of process within nature, that nature and the world, though created, is yet going through a continual process of creation. The same may be said of the continuing debate regarding Muir's contribution to contemporary environmental thought and action.

[31] Ibid, 20.

[32] John Muir, "Wild Wool" in *Steep Trails* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1918) in *EWDB*, 874.

Governed by what he saw as an overall unity and right relationship within nature, Muir's unique mountain mysticism brought a deeply intuitive and spiritual knowing of the wild, and a gradually evolving personal worldview. When we are wildest, prepared to step beyond our narrow and confined ideologies and social strictures, risking an intellectual and spiritual journey on an untrammeled path, we gain deeper intuitions and insights into our state of being. Coupled with his mystical relationship with wild nature, Muir's life and work also incorporated Scots practicality and common sense. Muir was, as Oelschlaeger put it "one of that rare breed whose life unifies *theorie* and *praxis*...who not only speculated about but also changed the world."[33] John Muir accomplished this with marked and long-lasting effect.

John Muir's influence on contemporary environmentalism is writ large. He is considered a proto-ecological thinker, a wilderness mystic with cosmological range, and savvy political activist with the power to inspire and motivate people for the preservation of parks and wilderness. He also personifies the 'mythic mountaineer' for many who have hoisted a backpack, nursed blisters or navigated a glacial field. As the first President of the Sierra Club, Muir institutionalized the 'radical amateur tradition' of preservationism within the political spectrum of late 20th century America, effectively placing ethical consideration of the wild within political discourse, then and now.[34]

As a literary figure, Muir was influenced in part by the romantic genre through the transcendental writings of Thoreau and Emerson. Muir, however, transcended the transcendentalist genre of Emerson, moving past the Cartesian-Baconian concept of nature as commodity in the spiritual and material sense. Nature, for Muir, became all one, in which humanity was but a part of the whole – there was for Muir no separation between the human beings and nature in a physical or spiritual sense. Thoreau's wilderness philosophy resonates with Muir's, for both men delved into Nature, simply, with a belly-to-the-earth elemental awareness of a deep, primal universality. John Muir and Henry David Thoreau were kindred spirits, though Muir surpassed Thoreau with the depth of his trust in nature and deep visceral need for extended wilderness immersion. For Thoreau, the two-year sojourn at Walden Pond was an experiment in his search for 'natural man', gaining 'Indian wisdom' through a profound inter-relationship with nature.[35] For Muir, cleansing the stultifying effects of conventional society through long term wilderness immersion became a life necessity - nature was for Muir, as Cohen states, "the alpha and omega of life."[36] Even with the eventual responsibilities of a young growing family, a fruit ranch business, and increasing pressure to write in support of wilderness preservation, Muir inevitably returned to wilderness for spiritual grounding and physical health. Throughout his life, the unfolding of Muir's personal worldview moved toward what Oelschlaeger describes as "a level of cosmological sophistication that few have noticed."[37]

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[33] Max Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 172.

[34] A multitude of studies attest to Muir's impact on the political spectrum, including Stephen Fox's 'radical amateur tradition' in *The American Conservation Movement: American Conservation Movement*; Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1967) and *The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); and Patricia Ann Roberts, "John Muir and the Hetch-Hetchy Debate: A Study of the Demise of the Sublime in American Policy Rhetoric" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkely, 1987).

This 'cosmological sophistication' is perhaps John Muir's most lasting legacy. For while made, Muir is yet being made, continuing to inspire contemporary academic, biographical and philosophical discussion. The richness of Muir's proto-ecological thought and his unique expression of that thought, both practically and spiritually, underscores the range of interpretation of his life and work[38] J. Baird Callicott, Roderick Nash, Donald Worster and Max Oelschlaeger, among others, have all found Muir worthy of special consideration, and all of these scholars are contributing significantly to the postmodern debate within environmental ethics. This fluid and constantly evolving discourse engages a cross disciplinary, methodologically open process to examine and question the presumptions of modern thought - that certainty in human knowledge of the world is theoretically possible, and that reason, supported by modern science, provides humanity with the ability to objectively know and technologically control nature.[39] The diversity of academic consideration of Muir's life and thought indicates their relevance within postmodern environmental ethics. Muir has indeed foreshadowed some of the more contentious aspects of postmodern debate within environmental ethics with his own skepticism and deep questioning of the anthropocentric bias in 'Lord Man', and his advocacy of an ecocentric ethic.[40] We have yet to fully realize the 'cosmological sophistication' of Muir's life and thought – his intuitive sense of unity in all, of intrinsic value in all of creation, of humanity's place within nature - and apply those lessons to the postmodern project and beyond.

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[35] Oelschleager, *The Idea of Wilderness,* 170.

[36] Cohen, *The Pathless Way,* 51.

[37] Oelschleager, *The Idea of Wilderness*, 174-175.

[38] The concept of "proto-ecologist" is discussed by Oelschlaeger, who states that by incorporating empirical science into his worldview Muir moved past what George Session's has called a 'mystical ecologist.' The question remains whether Muir must be typecast as one or the other when both descriptions may be tenable within an overarching philosophy.

[39] Within the very term, postmodernism, there is an inference to that which lies after the postmodern debate. What is post postmodernism? What will this new age be and how should we go about dealing with the process of evolving towards it? After postmodernism there is an expectation of a different way of being in the world, profoundly different than the dualistic, utilitarian worldview that currently dominates modern civilization, an age we hope will actualize true sustainability.

J. Baird Callicott suggests we are working towards a "reconstructive postmodern ontology." [41] Taking note from the profound implications of ecology, we are attempting to "integrate diverse human points of view into a coherent and harmonious network."[42] As in the science of ecology, inter-relationships, symbiotic inter-dependencies and the non-static nature of evolving processes may be applied to a life fully and openly lived, and the forming and changing nature of an ecological consciousness. This chapter, therefore, will discuss the myriad interpretations of Muir's life and thought with the intent to posit a more inclusive interpretation - working with Callicott's idea of reconstructive postmodern ontology, and respectful of the fluidity inherent within the formation and articulation of an ecological philosophy.

Embracing the myriad interpretations of Muir's life and thought fosters awareness, if not a complete definition, of Muir's personal ecosophy. An 'ecosophy' is defined by Arne Naess as a "personal system, a personal philosophy, and for another's to reach us something in it must resound with us immediately. It need not be entirely original."[43] Naess introduced the idea of a personal ecosophy with tacit acknowledgement of the diversity of individual values, worldviews and actions. Furthermore, he suggests that a personal ecosophy is a "kind of total view which you feel at home with" and is always changing with the dynamics and experiences of each life.[44] Within an overview of the diverse interpretation on Muir's life and work, it is important to embrace that diversity as a legitimate academic debate, but to resist being caught up in semantics and interpretative turf wars. Muir's life and work still resonates with power and meaning in people's lives, and Muir's personal ecosophy encompasses this diversity of interpretation in varying degrees. With this diversity of interpretation in mind, this chapter posits what may be called, for the purposes of discussion: Ecosophy "M" where "M" is for Mountains; primal source of Muir's evolving wisdom and joyous 'being in the world.'

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[40] John Muir, "1000 Mile Walk to the Gulf", in *EWDB*, 160, 155. During Muir's 1000 mile walk to the Gulf of Mexico, he deeply questioned the anthropocentric bias in society, "The world, we are told, was made especially for man – a presumption not supported by the facts." In another statement Muir's advocacy for wild nature and rejection of anthropocentrism as 'Lord Man' is paramount, "Well, I have precious little sympathy for the selfish propriety of civilized man, and if a war of the races should occur between the wild beasts and Lord Man, I would be tempted to sympathize with the bears."

[41] J. Baird Callicott, *Beyond the Land Ethic*, 312. Within contemporary environmental philosophy, deconstructive postmodern debate refers to the criticism of modernism, while reconstructive postmodern debate seeks to provide alternative ways of thinking and being to the modern worldview. Further, 'ontology' refers to a branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being, or 'the way things are.'

[42] Ibid.

[43] Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 5.

> Benevolent, solemn, fateful, pervaded with divine light, every landscape glows like a countenance hallowed in eternal repose; and every one of its living creatures, clad in flesh and leave, and every crystal of its rocks, whether on the surface shining in the sun or buried miles deep in what we call darkness, is throbbing and pulsing with the heartbeats of God. All the world lies warm in one heart.[45]

The Philosophy of John Muir: an Eclectic Debate

What exactly is John Muir's foundational philosophy? A truly definitive answer may not be possible. John Muir could have attempted such a task, but to the chagrin of many he never wrote a succinct and all-encompassing treatise of his thought.[46] Rather, we find the thoughts, emotions and intuitions of his worldview embedded in an organic, random scattering throughout the substantial collection of his writing. Further, if he had given it any thought, Muir may well have felt that the boxing and labeling of his personal philosophy to be antithetical to the organic quality of experience and reflection that inform an evolving worldview. Or, staying true to his predilection to de-emphasize the narrow ego self in favor of a more all-encompassing view of nature, he may have felt that such an exercise was too full of "I."[47] Perhaps Muir simply believed that these ideas should be presented as they came to him, springing spontaneously from joyful inter-penetration with nature, and written glowing and direct into his field journals. Muir often acknowledged, however, that words were but an imperfect representation of the depth and meaning that nature provided through experience and insight.[48] It may be argued, in the face of efforts to attempt to define, organize and make sense of Muir's unique personal philosophy, that this very method of expression is a hallmark of his thought, and within this amorphous quality lies its greatest strength, resilience and applicability to ecological thought in his era as well as ours.[49]

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[44] Ibid, 37.

[45] John Muir, "Our National Parks" in *EWDB*, 489.

[46] Max Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness*, 172-73. Oelschlaeger discusses the difficulty that Muir biographers and environmental philosophers have encountered trying to pinpoint a specific philosophical definition of Muir's worldview, quoting Muir biographer, Frederick Turner, " I often find myself wishing he would go into some point more deeply, instead of skipping past it" and J. Baird Callicott, who in discussing the Aldo Leopold's clearly written treatise on the ethical responsibility of mankind for the non-human world states " Muir neither fully articulated nor fully grounded it, as Leopold did, in a supporting matrix of ideas." Oeschlaeger, 411.

In reviewing the many studies which address (in more or less detail) Muir's foundational philosophy and/or religion, it is initially confusing to consider the wide range of interpretations. How is it that so many Muir scholars have such apparently divergent interpretations of Muir's religious and philosophical life? Perhaps it is Muir's ability to express esoteric philosophical thought and spiritual insight in juxtaposition with his pragmatic (and often grudging) attention towards the reality of his time and the practical concerns of everyday life that inspires this range of interpretation. There was an interesting dichotomy at work in his life: wilderness mystic and practical farmer; wild Celt existing on bread and tea in his beloved Sierras and feted guest in the parlors of the eastern literary elite. So, some see him as a literary activist with practical understanding of political realities, while others view him as the quintessential wilderness mystic, or as devoted family man with a penchant for occasional wilderness forays and a remarkable gift for persuasive speech.

Perhaps a partial answer regarding Muir's universal appeal lies within his writing and how he worked his own perceptions and felt truths into the prose. He had a unique ability to engage his reader with a feeling of actually experiencing nature at that moment, without any marked imposition of his own self. This ability may be seen throughout his works, for instance, in describing rain in the Sierras, Muir writes:

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[47] Michael P. Branch, "Telling Nature's Story" in *John Muir in Historical Perspective*, Sally Miller ed., (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1999), 107. Branch effectively argues that Muir's style of writing effectively decentres the romantic self as Muir notes, "My own special self is nothing." Further, Branch argues that Muir's concept of self actually is an expansion or extension of the romantic idea of self, an important point to consider within the formation of Muir's unique ecosophy. Branch, 100.

[48] While describing the "operations of Nature" in its myriad forms, Muir laments "…to get this into words is a hopeless task. The leanest sketch of each feature would need a whole chapter…I can write only hints to incite good wanderers to come to the feast." In "Our National Parks," *EWDB*, 490.

[49] This amorphous quality will be addressed later in the chapter, when I discuss the foundational principles of the Deep Ecology movement, and Arne Naess' approach to personal ecosophy.

> Now scarcely a drop can fail to find a beautiful mark: on the tops of the peaks, on the smooth glacier pavements, on the curves of the domes, on moraines full of crystals, on the thousand forms of yosemitic sculpture with their tender beauty of balmy, flowery vegetation, laving, plashing, glinting, pattering; some falling softly on meadows, creeping out of sight, seeking and finding every thirsty rootlet, some through the spires of the woods, sifting in dust through the needles, whispering good cheer to each of them…[50]

Even when Muir uses a tacit first person narrative, the focus continues to be on the experience, the nature of what is happening is what is paramount, and Muir simply happens to be a part of at that moment. After climbing a tall conifer during a windstorm along a tributary of the Yuba River, Muir is embedded within the experience and the focus is not so much on him but on the interplay of his experience and what is happening within the wind-tossed trees.

> I experienced no difficulty in reaching the top of this one, and never before did I enjoy so noble an exhilaration of motion. The slender tops fairly flapped and swished in the passionate torrent, bending and swirling backward and forward, round courses, while I clung with muscles firm braced, like a bobo-link on a reed…Now my eye roved over the piny hills and dales as over fields of waving grain, and felt the light running in ripples and broad swelling undulations across the valleys from ridge to ridge, as the shining foliage was stirred by corresponding waves of air.[51]

As a natural guide, Muir's gentle abrogation of his "own special self" allows an awareness of his presence, but leaves the experience open for that reader to become personally embedded and inter-related within the experience.[52] With this rather exceptional gift of literary tact, the personal worldview of the reader is infused within the reading, creating a distinct sense of affinity between Muir and the reader. What a powerful gift for motivation![53]

Returning to the question of why Muir has generated such a plethora of interpretation on his life and work, it is important to keep in mind that we all try to find meaning through continual reassessment and identification of our own experiences and worldviews with those of others. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest the resulting range of interpretation of Muir's life and thought stems from each scholar's personal affinity and identification with Muir's foundational messages.[54] Further, it is noteworthy that Muir's perennial relevance to both academics and lay people emerges through symbiotic, mutually cathartic relationships between these interpretations. It is all part of that great postmodern debate that Callicott and others believe is going on right now, and as such, Muir continues to act as a catalyst in our ongoing search for philosophical and practical solutions to contemporary ecological issues.

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[50] John Muir, "The Mountains of California" in *EWDB*, 409.

[51] Ibid, 399-400.

[52] Michael Paul Branch, "Telling Nature's Story" in *John Muir in Historical Perspective*, 107.

[53] Roderick Nash in *Wilderness and the American Mind* portrays Muir as wilderness 'publicizer,' who used his considerable powers of articulation to benefit the cause of wilderness preservation. Muir had, as Nash noted, "an intensity and enthusiasm that commanded widespread attention." Nash, 122.

The diversity of interpretation of Muir's foundational philosophical and religious convictions is an interesting study in itself. The first Muir biographers, William Frederic Badè and Linnie Marsh Wolfe clearly see Muir as a preservationist with solid Christian principles underlying his political advocacy and deep veneration of wilderness. After Wolfe's Pulitzer prize winning biography on Muir, published in 1945, there was a short hiatus of Muir studies, followed by Herbert Smith and Edith Jane Hadley's studies in the 1950's. More importantly, with the publication of Aldo Leopold's foundational ecological treatise "Sand County Almanac" in 1948 with its elegantly profound 'Land Ethic', and the galvanizing advent of Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" in 1962, the environmental movement was given new impetus for serious introspection. For many, John Muir's approach to environmental activism and his unique eco-philosophy became increasingly relevant to contemporary environmental issues, sparking re-examination of his published works as well as the voluminous notes, letters, journals and other miscellaneous papers long held in trust by the Muir-Hanna family. From the resulting studies, several are worthy of note for the depth of scholarship as well as the diversity of hermeneutics.

Michael Cohen's study of John Muir's spiritual and philosophical journey interprets Muir's High Sierra experiences as exhibiting the essence of Buddhist philosophy, bringing about 'satori,' a highly personal and sudden state of enlightenment.[55] Stephen Fox believes that Muir came to embrace pantheism through a

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[54] Michael Cohen's *The Pathless Way*, is self-described study of not only Muir's thought, but the author's: "…I knew that when I began to question Muir's decision, I was also exploring my own thoughts about the mountains, and about parks….This book about Muir is also a book about my own thinking; and not only my own thinking but the thinking of a whole community, of my generation." Cohen, xiii (Introduction)

[55] Ibid. 69. J. Baird Callicott has also described 'satori' as having an aesthetic quality within its momentary/eternal state. See also Michael Zimmerman, "Quantum Theory, Intrinsic Value and Panentheism" in *Postmodern Environmental Ethics*, Max Oelshlaeger, ed. (New York: State of New York Press, 1995), 297. Zimmerman describes this state as involving direct, noncognitive, nondualistic experience where "there is a direct manifestation of…internal relatedness."

"private communion" with Nature, and "…under its spell he reached his conclusions by intuitive leaps and flashes…literally read the face of the land, treating it as a vast book that – given patience and close study – would yield a truer sense of the cosmos."[56] Ronald Limbaugh and Dennis Williams place Muir firmly within the realms of Protestant Christianity; the former describing Muir as a Christian independent who rejected denominational dogma, the latter stating Muir was a Christian Mystic who reconciled Christianity with science in his personal vision of nature.[57]

Donald Worster argues that Muir's Protestant roots were instrumental to his environmentalism, describing Muir as frontier evangelist who preached the gospel of nature and the beauty of God's mountains. Going on to describe a combination of four Protestant qualities; "moral activism, ascetic discipline, egalitarian individualism, and aesthetic spirituality," Worster states that through John Muir "a new radical variant to conventional Judeo-Christian beliefs was born."[58] In his classic book on the history of the wilderness concept in American society, Roderick Nash portrays Muir as a preservationist; a beleaguered defender of wilderness who used his exceptional writing and publicizing talents to argue for the aesthetic, recreational and spiritual use of wilderness.[59]

Moving deeper into philosophical and religious tenets of Muir's worldview, Max Oelschlaeger states that Muir grew through panentheism, a version of mystical Christianity which "allowed for both the divinity of creation and the separate existence for a divine cosmic presence" to a panthiest perspective where divinity suffuses all Nature.[60] Oelshlaeger also states that Muir anticipates the postmodern recognition of the power of ecology, not only as a science, but as a foundation to Deep Ecology principles.[61] Within the Deep Ecology movement, Bill Devall and George Sessions place Muir with Martin Heidegger, Gary Snyder, Robinson Jeffers and David Brower as seminal thinkers to the deep ecology perspective.[62] It is Muir's "vision of the essential oneness of the Earth, his sense of participatory science, his expression of biocentric equality, and his active leadership in issues of public policy affecting wild places" that underscores his relevance to the Deep Ecology Movement.[63]

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[56] Stephen Fox, *American Conservation Movement*, 50.

[57] Ronald Limbaugh, "The Nature of John Muir's Religion" in *John Muir: Life and Legacy*, The Pacific Historian, vol. 29, number 2-3 (Stockton: University of the Pacific for the Holt-Atherton Centre for Western Studies, 1985), 19. See also Dennis Williams, "John Muir, Christian Mysticism, and the Spiritual Value of Nature" in *John Muir: Life and Work*, Sally M. Miller ed., (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 90.

[58] Donald Worster, "John Muir and the Roots of American Environmentalism" in *The Wealth of Nature*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 194-6.

[59] Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 122-40.

[60] Max Oelshlaeger, 190.

In brief summary of this contemporary range of discourse, John Muir has therefore been considered Protestant, Christian mystic, Primitive Christian, panenthiest, pantheist, Buddhist, Taoist, post-modernist, preservationist, ecocentrist, and proto-ecological in his anticipation of contemporary Deep Ecology premises and ecological science. Perhaps not surprisingly, John Muir has also described himself as a "…self-styled poetico-trampo-geologist-bot and ornith-natural, etc.!!! ", recognizing the many faceted nature of his own life, embracing all within his own field of endeavour.[64] The very nature of Muir's multi-dimensional life has certainly provided grist for the academic mill, and continues to do so. On that note, I now take a look at how John Muir's life and thought fits the contemporary debate on environmental pragmatism.

John Muir: Environmental Pragmatist?

To add to this eclectic mix of interpretation regarding John Muir's life and thought, an argument could also be made that Muir pioneered certain tenets of contemporary environmental pragmatism.

Environmental pragmatism adheres to moral pluralism, arguing that the diversity of moral intuitions that underpin theoretical and metatheoretical positions should not hinder our ability to effectively and efficiently deal with the environmental crisis. After all, despite his deep ecocentric ethic, Muir utilized the practical merits of empirical science to support his theory of Yosemite glaciers and argued for the preservation of wilderness for "good men", who would be free to "…pick gold and gems from the hills, to cut and hew, dig and plant, for homes and bread… the ground will be glad to feed them and the pines will come down from the mountains for their homes as willingly as the cedars came from Lebanon for Solomon's temple."[65]

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[61] Ibid, 197. The Deep Ecology movement, initiated by Norwegian philosopher, Arne Naess, is best described as an approach to environmental philosophy and ethics. Deep Ecology is not a systematic philosophy, rather it presents eight principles for action that seek to work out an alternative philosophical worldview that foster ecological consciousness, unity in all nature (including humanity) and eventually a profound change in the dominant worldview of modern industrial society. Deep Ecology will be discussed at greater length later in this chapter.

[62] Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered,* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1985), 80.

[63] Ibid, 104.

[64] *John Muir Papers,* Series I A, Reel 06, frame 03329. Muir's description of his role as written to his friend, Robert Underwood Johnson, September 13, 1889.

Proponents of environmental pragmatism believe that despite theoretically distinct philosophical positions, it is possible to utilize the most appropriate (practical) position for an environmental issue to gain resolution to that issue. Basically, it's a 'get at the job with everything at our disposal' practical approach, fed up with ongoing wrangling within environmental philosophy while the ecological health of the planet deteriorates into crisis.

Distinctly practical in strategy and cast in utilitarian language, much of what John Muir advocated during his 'political' years appears to utilize whatever arguments or means he had at his disposal to incite the public to preserve forest reservations and parks. So, where in all of this anthropocentric (man-centred) rhetoric did the wilderness mystic go? Where is the fey Celt in ecstatic communion with nature, singing "…I'm in the woods, woods, woods and they are in me-ee-ee…"?[66] The passionate voice may have been voluntarily muted, or perhaps left behind as a spiritual anachronism that could exist only during the years of wilderness wandering.

Roderick Nash posed a similar question in his discussion of Muir's preservationist ideology, asking "Why did Muir abandon the environmental ethics approach?" and ventured an answer, "The reason, it seems clear, is that he got into politics and became pragmatic."[67] With this in mind, a closer look at contemporary environmental pragmatism may provide further insights into Nash's question and subsequent answer. As Muir engaged himself in preservationist work, it did appear that he not only abandoned his earlier environmental ethics approach, but also the blazing core of his personal moral ontology – a worldview he constructed and embraced through long term immersion in wild nature. But did he truly abandon his early ethic of the wild, or did he seek some other way of realizing its profound implications for society? To help answer this question, let's now take a look at the tenets of contemporary environmental pragmatism in order to see how it may fit the way that John Muir advanced the preservationist agenda.

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[65] John Muir, "Our National Parks", in *EWDB,* 604.

[66] Within this letter to his friend and confidante, Jeanne Carr, Muir's ecstatic joy, articulated with religious metaphors and deeply spiritual in tone, leaps off the page with the force of his emotion. It is one (albeit memorable) example of the mystical wilderness years he spent in Yosemite, the years during which deep communion with nature crystallized his vision of a cosmological unity. The letter is found in "The Life and Letters of John Muir" by William Frederic Badè, reprinted in *John Muir: His Life and Letters and other Writings*, Terry Gifford, Editor, (Seattle, The Mountaineers, 1996), 140.

[67] Roderick Nash, *The Rights of Nature,* 41.

Contemporary Environmental Pragmatism

Springing from classical pragmatism, environmental pragmatism has become an increasingly debated school of environmental thought. Advocates for environmental pragmatism feel a pressing need to arrive at practical strategies to resolve the escalating complexity of contemporary environmental issues.[68] As mentioned above, environmental pragmatism as a philosophical school of thought embraces the concept of moral pluralism, specifically theoretical pluralism and metatheoretical pluralism. Metatheoretical pluralism refers to "openness to the plausibility of divergent ethical theories working together in a single moral enterprise…" and theoretical pluralism refers to the "acknowledgment of distinct theoretically incommensurable bases for direct moral consideration."[69]

By placing theoretical pluralism under the umbrella of environmental pragmatism, theorists such as Christopher Stone, Bryan Norton and Anthony Weston, among others, believe that it is possible, and useful to acknowledge moral considerability across theoretically distinct positions. Instead of wasting time arguing distinct positions, environmental pragmatists believe it is prudent to find common ground and create workable strategies in public policy. As suggested by Light and Katz, an example of impractical philosophical wrangling may be seen in the ongoing debate between moral theoretical distinctions regarding the ethical standing of animals. The debate, they believe, has spun interminable theoretical discussions but no practical resolution within public policy. [70]

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[68] Andrew Light and Eric Katz, eds. *Environmental Pragmatism* (London: Routledge, 1996), 4-5.

[69] Ibid. 4.

[70] Ibid. 4-5. The example of theoretical distinct positions that Light and Katz allude to involves the debate on the ethical standing of animals. Peter Singer argues that animals are sentient and capable of

As Light and Katz define the strategy, environmental pragmatism is not considered a single moral view, but brings in a plethora of related concepts to try to find a common practical application of philosophy to social/environmental issues, resisting what pragmatists contend is a dominant trend to "homogenize" environmental philosophy.[71] As they so succinctly put it, "the call for moral pluralism, the decreasing importance of theoretic debates and the placing of practical issue of policy consensus in the foreground of concern, are central aspects of our conception of environmental pragmatism."[72] Light and Katz also regard the foundational differences within metatheoretical positions as potentially having no real hindrance to existing together within a specific moral enterprise.[73]

According to environmental pragmatists it is entirely tenable that within the moral pluralist position such divergent theorists as resourcists, preservationists and even followers of Deep Ecology could work together on the practical resolution of a single environmental issue, such as the preservation of an ecologically rich wetland. Using this example, resourcists may see the preservation of a wetland as needed to filter upstream pollutants to ensure safe drinking water for downstream communities, or because they are required to do so within a regulatory framework – the price of doing business on the landscape. Preservationists would see wetland preservation as integral to a fully functioning landscape, of which not only people but all living things benefit. Followers of Deep Ecology would agree with the preservationists in this instance, but would also see the richness and diversity of the wetland as having intrinsic value unto itself, and ought to be allowed to flourish. It is therefore possible that all of these distinct theoretical positions could exist and work together for the preservation of a wetland in this particular situation.

On a practical level, environmental pragmatism utilizes both 'applied' and 'practical' philosophy to bring about real concrete policy answers to environmental issues. As Bryan Norton suggests, applied philosophy works towards applying certain general philosophical principles to judge the best goals or

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suffering, and therefore deserve moral considerability, while Paul Taylor states that all living beings possess teleological centers of life, and while not perhaps equal in moral standing, still possess of equal intrinsic worth. J. Baird Callicott discusses the question of moral standing in these two positions in "The Case Against Moral Pluralism" in *Beyond the Land Ethic*, 151-2.

[71] Ibid. 3-4.

[72] Ibid. 5.

[73] Ibid. 4.

options within a specific hypothetical public policy case.[74] Practical philosophy, on the other hand, is more "problem-oriented" than applied philosophy and develops theories that promote understanding and resolution of very specific policy issues.[75] Norton goes on to explain that, in his view, practical philosophy does not bring a theoretical construct to the actual problem, rather, through struggling with the problem, an appropriate theory applicable to the circumstance may be generated to deal with the issue. "Practice is prior to theory in the sense that principles are ultimately generated from practice, not vice versa."[76] Adaptive management, therefore, becomes a practical strategy within the environmental pragmatist agenda, where dealing with uncertainty of human knowledge and values requires compromises and incremental change to bring about gradual improvement in practical goals and understanding. "In the process, both information and values will be adjusted to become more appropriate and adaptive to particular situations."[77]

With the above points in mind, it is possible to review John Muir's practical strategies for action in defense of wilderness and address the question of whether Muir's thought and action did, or did not, fit the principles of contemporary environmental pragmatism. This discussion will address whether Muir utilized both 'applied' and 'practical' philosophy within his preservationist strategy, and if he embraced a moral pluralist perspective throughout his unrelenting and passionate advocacy for the protection of the wild. It will also address whether the concept of preservationism, as Muir used it, was foundationally pragmatic in its intent and implementation. Finally, this discussion will help to illuminate the essential nature of Muir's personal environmental philosophy, and how he translated his heart-deep convictions into action. But first, let's take a look at preservationism as a school of thought within environmental philosophy to set the stage for subsequent discussion on environmental pragmatism and Muir.

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[74] Bryan G. Norton, "Integration or Reduction: Two Approaches to Environmental Values" in *Environmental Pragmatism*, 107.

[75] Ibid, 108.

[76] Ibid. 108.

[77] Ibid. 124.

Preservationism as a Pragmatic Strategy

Preservationism, as a wilderness philosophical concept, is rather ambiguous. As Neil Everden suggests, the term "…speaks to the defense of wilderness; conservation, which is concerned with the wise use of resources in perpetuity; and perhaps a kind of pastoralism, which is associated with rustic lifestyles and a return to simpler pleasures."[78] Evernden adds that these do not by any means cover the entire definitive use of the term 'preservation', and in fact, "…there is cause to wonder whether it is a useful or appropriate one at all."[79]

While rejecting the resourcist concept of nature as machine and provider of resources for utilitarian economic purposes only, preservationism retains a distinctly anthropocentric focus in that nature is preserved for values that, while benefiting nature, also benefit human beings. Beauty, recreation, rarity, and species diversity are all foundational elements within the preservationist idea of wilderness, but human-centered interests remain, for the most part, at the core of most arguments for these values within the preservationist school.[80] Even the esoteric, subjective value of beauty may be used to argue the preservationist cause of a specific site, but this, as Evernden notes "…also promotes the idea of beauty as simply another resource, like timber or mineral content; it is another material thing that can be utilized by humans."[81]

The dual ethical nature of preservationism may be both strength and weakness within the practical application of environmental ethics to real, on-the-ground issues. Preservationism may be argued from an anthropocentric stance (preservation of multiple values – beauty, recreation, wildlife, clean air and clean water) as well as for a non-anthropocentric position (preservation as an ethical act which recognizes the right of nature to exist for and of its own sake, intrinsic value). Therefore, it fits quite readily into the environmental pragmatist's notion of practical philosophy by letting the situation dictate what type of argument should or could be utilized in order to realize the best return.

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[78] Neil Evernden, *The Natural Alien: Humankind and the Environment*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1999), 4.

[79] Ibid, 4.

[80] Max Oelschlaeger, 292. Oeslschlaeger discusses the differences between resourcism, preservationism and ecocentricism in depth, stating "…from an ecocentric or biocentric perspective, preservationism remains anthropocentric, since human interests are ultimate arbiters of value."

[81] Neil Evernden, *The Natural Alien*, 24.

In this sense, preservationism embraces moral pluralism, and could actually be considered a strategy within contemporary environmental pragmatism. Preservation of wilderness has effectively been argued from both anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric perspectives in attempts to institutionalize protection. Incremental gains in the protection of nature, wherever they may be found and by whatever means available are therefore quite acceptable – it doesn't matter how the remedy is founded as long as it occurs![82] Therefore, persuasive arguments understandable by a predominantly utilitarian society may be framed in ways that are not of central importance to many preservationists, but may be adopted in order to bring about the desired outcomes.[83] Preservationism could actually be thought of as a working 'tool', a 'hands-on' application of practical philosophy, where the arguments for preservation are born from the practical considerations of the specific place at a specific time. In this case, theory to support the preservationist agenda may or may not be a result of the debate, but as Norton suggests, the debate generates '…less sweeping rules of thumb that can be argued to be appropriate in a particular context…'[84]

Environmental pragmatism posits that by embracing moral pluralism, preservationist arguments may actually be strengthened by appealing to a wider array of philosophical and moral sentiments and 'make sense' to a wider public. By adopting both anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric arguments, environmental pragmatists would generally agree that this is not only imminently practical, but ethically conscionable. After all, the outcome of one more wetland protected, or the extension of a wilderness area, or legislating protection for an endangered species could certainly be seen as justifying the means. Muir himself, at the inception of preservation as a school of environmental thought, certainly used practical arguments for the preservation of wilderness, forest reserves and parks, and as we shall see, he had varying degrees of success with this endeavor.

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[82] Incremental gains may be useful in the short term, but 'end goal' criteria are essential for any preservation endeavor to have long term success.

[83] "Its all about deal-making" Alberta born environmentalist, Harvey Locke, has said on occasion.

[84] Bryan Norton, "Integration or Reduction" in *Environmental Pragmatism,* 108.

John Muir and Preservationism: a Practical Endeavor

> The tendency nowadays to wander in wildernesses is delightful to see. Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life.[85]

> Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike.[86]

In her Pulitzer Prize winning biography on John Muir's life, Linnie Marsh Wolfe classified Muir's preservationist advocacy as 'aesthetically utilitarian.' It is an apt description, for Muir used his preservationist arguments to incite public perception and support for saving wilderness, forest reserves and parks. Utilitarian and anthropocentric in tone, much of Muir's arguments were couched in terms that the public could understand and readily endorse, for he appealed for the preservation of wilderness for beauty, physical and spiritual health, and the lightening of the "…vice of over-industry and the deadly apathy of luxury."[87] But still, beauty, recreation and health benefits, while aspiring, as Wolfe put it "…to the higher as well as the lower pragmatism" were certainly viewed as commodity for humanity; simply variations on the anthropocentric theme that underscored the excessive timber harvesting, mining and agricultural expansion that Muir deplored.[88]

John Muir did not elect to enter a concerted political debate on the escalating devastation of wilderness until the late 1880's.[89] As Cohen notes, entering into public discourse and becoming a public figure was an act of sacrifice on Muir's part, for it required a subjugation of the ecstatic inner voice, a public tempering of his passionate and cosmic worldview of unity in all. It would be "edge-work," as Cohen put it and

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[85] John Muir, "Our National Parks," *EWDB*, 459.

[86] John Muir, "The Yosemite", *EWDB*, 714.

[87] John Muir, "Our National Parks", *EWDB*, 459.

[88] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, 188.

[89] Robert Underhill Johnson, editor of '*Century*', an eastern monthly publication, urged Muir to pick up his pen to bring the public's attention to the devastation of Yosemite and advocate preserving it as a National Park.

"…harrowing for Muir."[90] But enter the political arena he did, for it had come to point that he could not ignore the growing need to advocate preservation for America's remaining wilderness.

For John Muir, the decision to become politically active, although reluctantly made, was not a result of some recent comprehension of the magnitude of despoliation of the wild. Throughout his early life in Wisconsin, Upper Canada and eventually the Sierra Nevadas of California, Muir witnessed the relentless clearing and burning of the frontier forests, making way for the modernist ideal of progress. The "gobble gobble school of economics" he grumbled, where "…bread more than timber or beauty was wanted: and in the blindness of hunger, the early settlers, claiming Heaven as their guide, regarded God's trees as only a larger kind of pernicious weed, extremely hard to get rid of."[91]

As Nash attests, Muir knew that he had to convince the public and the government of the worth of wilderness, and with a greater social awareness than would have been expected of the scraggly-bearded sawyer in Yosemite, he chartered a very practical course. Consciously tempering "…his biocentricity and the ethical system it implied, hiding them in his published writing and speeches under cover of anthropocentricism" John Muir embarked into the political arena on behalf of the Sierra wilderness he loved.[92] The Yosemite campaign continued through 1889 to 1890 when Congress signed the Yosemite Park bill, thus creating the second national park in U.S. history. Muir's efforts had succeeded more than he realized, for during the lobbying efforts, he found increasing support from west-coast conservationists, which eventually culminated in the formation of the Sierra Club in June, 1892. At its inception, the Sierra Club voted Muir in as president, a position he held until his death. While providing administrative and political support for Muir's lobbying efforts, the Club itself, by virtue of its role as organizing a political force for wilderness, cast a 'civilizing' effect upon Muir's true inner voice, causing him to grumble "this formal, legal, unwild work is out of my line."[93]

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[90] Michael Cohen, *The Pathless Way,* 278.

[91] See Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, 102; and John Muir, "Our National Parks", *EWDB,* 593.

[92] Roderick Nash, *The Rights of Nature*, 41.

[93] John Muir quoted in Stephen Fox, *American Conservation Movement,* 107.

Unwild work it may have been, but necessary work. With the formation of the Sierra Club, the preservationist movement gained a unique character all its own, significantly different from the dominant and mainstream resourcist and utilitarian conservationist school. Recreation was a keystone of the Sierra Club's mandate, enshrining exploration, enjoyment and accessibility to the mountain wilderness within their bylaws, but so also was the intent to enlist the support of the public to preserve the forests and natural features of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Anthropocentric in tone, the mandate of the Sierra Club advanced the human need for aesthetic appreciation of untouched nature – of wilderness as necessary for the physical and spiritual health of people. The focus may have been more benevolent towards nature than the strong resourcist temperament of the mainstream conservation movement of that day, but it still retained a foundationally anthropocentric and practical mandate.

While John Muir and the Sierra Club advocated the tenets of preservationism throughout the tumultuous years of the 1890's, utilitarian conservation found its architect in Gifford Pinchot; Yale graduate, son of a privileged wealthy family, and advocate for 'sustained yield' forest management. Pinchot was politically astute and ambitious, and advanced a progressive ideology of conservation in which nature's bounty was commodity, and that "the first duty of the human race is to control the earth it lives upon."[94] Pinchot's advocacy of the sustained yield approach to forest management was grounded in the German model of scientific forestry. Having visited Germany as a young graduate student, Pinchot was convinced that this was the way to sustain a perpetual supply of wood products for a growing nation. "Forestry is handling trees so that one crop follows another" he wrote, and "…a well-handled farm gets more and more productive as the years pass. So does a well-handled forest."[95]

Pinchot and Muir met for the first time in 1893. Gifford Pinchot was respectful of Muir's reputation as scientist and mountaineer, and greatly enjoyed Muir's renowned gift for talk.[96] Through their differences in the articulation of value in nature, John Muir and Gifford Pinchot personified a schism within the conservation movement that would have far reaching consequences. Pinchot advocated wise use and professional management of forest resources, Muir passionately defended wilderness values and the need for preservation. The schism not only signaled a fork in the road for environmental policy debate, but historically marked a division in the way that society values and articulates value in nature. The schism still remains today – different expressions of value in and of nature continue to underscore the majority of contemporary environmental issues in some way. Progressive conservation or resourcism retains a tight hold on the modern mindset, a tenacity that Neil Evernden attributes to the conception that resourcism is "… a kind of modern religion which casts all of creation into categories of utility…Yet its most dangerous aspect is its apparent good intention.[97]

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[94] Gifford Pinchot, "The Fight for Conservation" in *American Environmentalism: The Formative Period, 1860 – 1915*, Donald Worster, ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1973), 86.

[95] Donald Worster, *Natures' Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 267.

[96] Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind,* 135.

Good intentions were certainly a hallmark of Pinchot's advancement of the sustained yield concept of commodities for the benefit of society as a whole. Gifford Pinchot believed in "the development and use of the earth and all its resources for the enduring good of men".[98] In 1905, as Chief Forester of the newly formed U.S. Forest Service, Pinchot wielded a great deal of power in Washington. He advocated the opening of public lands to the U.S. Forest Service administration in order to efficiently provide economic prosperity for the nation. For Pinchot, conservation stood for development, prevention of waste, and for the economic prosperity of the American people, "…the greatest good to the greatest number for the longest time" and held close the virtues of "foresight, prudence, thrift and intelligence in dealing with public matters."[99] Business to Pinchot was the mainstay of America, and he regretted the broader application of political concern to the nation's interests, stating "unfortunately, we have come into the habit of considering the government of the United States as a political organization rather than as a business organization."[100] Within Pinchot's modernist stance, nature was simply commodity, forests were reserves of wealth to be wisely managed and able to provide economic benefit for the greater body of the American people, and it was the patriotic duty of the U.S. Forest Service to ensure that this came about.

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[97] Neil Evernden, *The Natural Alien,* 23.

[98] Donald Worster, *Natures's Economy*, 266.

[99] Gifford Pinchot, "The Fight for Conservation" in *American Environmentalism: The Formative Period, 1860-1915,* 85-7.

[100] Ibid. 89.

In 1896, Gifford Pinchot and John Muir had worked as colleagues on the Forestry Commission, a government sponsored survey of the state of western forests initiated by Charles S. Sargent of Harvard University. Appalled by the widespread deforestation throughout the United States, the Forestry Commission agreed on the need for some sort of protection for forest reserves, but differences erupted over their mandate and administration. Muir and Sargent proposed setting aside large tracts of forested land in protected reserve status, with the responsibility of safeguarding delegated to the Army. Pinchot agreed with the reserve idea but only under the auspices of a professional forest service, which, he believed, would most effectively manage the forest reserves for the benefit of the American people. Muir and Sargent looked upon the forest reserve idea as a way to preserve forests in their wild and beautiful state. Pinchot and fellow Forestry Commission member, Arnold Hague of the United States Geological Survey, viewed the forest reserves as foundation for utilitarian, scientific, professional forest management for the good of the American people. The resulting Forestry Commission Report was a curious hybrid of compromise from both factions, recommending the formation of new reserves, a ban on sheep grazing, Army patrols to ensure policy compliance, but it also allowed for some forestry and mineral exploration.[101]

Following the Forestry Commission Report, President Cleveland unilaterally approved thirteen new forest reserves, totaling 21.4 million acres. The hew and cry from western politicians, goaded by lumber, mining and grazing interests, fell like a storm on Washington. The matter was shunted forward to the incoming McKinley administration, but with judicious lobbying by Sargent and Robert U. Johnson, the reserves were left intact. What followed was a political seesaw act, with Muir writing articles in support of government protection and administration of the reserves, Congress suspending all but two of the reserves set aside by Cleveland until further study, and in the backrooms of power, Gifford Pinchot successfully lobbying to conduct the studies. Feeling betrayed by Pinchot, Sargent and Muir watched with growing trepidation as the reserves were challenged again in Congress, and although retained, the appointment of Pinchot to head the Forest Service within the Department of Agriculture bode ill for the preservation of the forest reserves in their natural state.

On a personal level, Muir's eventual split with Gifford Pinchot occurred in Seattle in 1897, but the real division in their foundational philosophies was a long time in gestation. Cohen writes that early in Muir's work with the Forestry Commission he saw himself as a mediator, a sort of bridge between the Sargent's botanical position and Pinchot's utilitarianism.[102] Perhaps, as Cohen ventures, Muir really did hope that there could be some sort of reconciliation between a wild forest and a used one through the auspices of properly implemented science. However, during the span of the 1890's, after seeing first hand the scope and pace of destructive deforestation, and the power of the political business lobby, Muir gave up hope for a tidy end to the dilemma. Further, having read Pinchot's statement in a Seattle newspaper that sheep grazing would be allowed in the forest reserves, Muir confronted Pinchot and upon learning that, indeed, Pinchot had been quoted correctly, Muir retorted "Then…if that is the case, I don't want anything more to do with you. When we were in the Cascades last summer, you yourself stated that the sheep did a great deal of harm."[103]

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[101] Stephen Fox, *American Conservation Movement,* 113.

The separation between John Muir and Gifford Pinchot was the turning point within the conservation movement in the United States. Up to this time, Muir had tried hard to compromise with the idea that wise use of the forests would be in the best interest of the forests themselves, in fact, any kind of management would be better than the rampant, wholesale liquidation he had witnessed. To this end, he wrote in 1896, "Forest management must be put on a rational, permanent scientific basis, as in every other civilized country."[104] But as Nash notes, after the split with Pinchot, Muir's writing reflects a complete shift in focus, away from wise use and forestry and back to the essence of true wilderness.[105] "Thousands of God's wild blessings will search you and soak you as if you were a sponge, and the big days will go uncounted" he wrote in early 1898, reverting back to the intent of the wild young Muir of the 1870's.[106]

It is also important to note that during this time of Muir's political baptism and subsequent disenchantment, his representation of the Sierra Club had to remain true to the Club's mandate. The 1890's appears to be a decade of fermentation, a mix of tactics, an endeavor to fight for preservationism on whatever grounds are provided, and working with allies, regardless of their foundational philosophical stances. It was a practical whole-field approach to learning the territory, navigating the rough patches and finding allies in unexpected places, and if it wasn't wholly satisfying for Muir, it did provide profound lessons for engagement in the political arena.

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[102] Michael Cohen, *The Pathless Way,* 291.

[103] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, 275-76.

[104] John Muir, "The National Parks and Forest Reservations." in William F.Kimes, and Maymie B. Kimes, *John Muir: A Reading Bibliography*, (Fresno: Panorama West Books, 1986), 58.

[105] Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 138.

[106] John Muir, "Wild Parks and Forest Reservations of the West" in Kimes, *John Muir: A Reading Bibliography*, 62.

John Muir eventually realized that he should concentrate his appeal to the public through the auspices of tourism. Where he would be most effective, he felt, would be to induce people to come out into the wild in order for them to come alive and fully comprehend the need for preserving wilderness areas, forest reserves and national parks. "Heaven knows that John [the] Baptist was not more eager to get all his fellow sinners into the Jordan than I to baptize all of mine in the beauty of God's mountains" he wrote during his early years in Yosemite, a personal conviction he kept throughout his life.[107] Muir knew he could not appeal to the public directly from his mystical wild side; that which was infused with the essence of holism and intrinsic value, in and of nature for its own sake. Nor had his pleas for forest reservations as repositories of botanical wealth and beauty had enough weight to politically check utilitarian forest management. Both strategies, he realized, would be asking for 'crank' status, and would greatly hinder any argument for wilderness to a public steeped in modernist utilitarian ideology. Modernism as a dominant cultural paradigm within Muir's time embraced empirical reductionist science and technology as all-powerful, touted progress as a given, advocated Cartesian-Baconian dualism of mind and matter, and reductionist science as the tool to control nature for the benefit of man as the apex of creation.[108] It was an unfriendly time for a mystical wilderness wanderer. With this cultural certainty of man's rightful place as lord of terrestrial creation, Muir knew arguments to the contrary would be suspect with the public.

So, with his own unique Scots practicality John Muir sought an ethical bridge, appealing for preservation of wilderness for "beauty as well as bread", with the hope that remediation of the dominant modernist worldview would eventually move people towards a more unified relationship with nature.[109]

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[107] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *John of the Mountains: the Unpublished Journals of John Muir*, 86. Excerpt from Muir's journal titled "Trip to Mount Clark and the Illilouette Basin, Thence up the Merced Canyon to Lake Nevada, Returning by way of Cloud's Rest."

[108] Max Oelschlaeger, 89, 202.

[109] In this classic quote, "Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike" Muir adheres to a practical strategy;

Muir's new strategy melded the fire of his Yosemite years with a new cunning gained from the bumps and bruises of the Forestry Commission experience. If he had to use a utilitarian argument to gain credibility, he would use the argument in such a way as to subversively attain, to Muir's mind, a necessary outcome for both people and nature. By encouraging people to come into intimate contact with wild nature, Muir felt they could not help but fully realize the essential unity and beauty of all creation and would thereby be moved to save it from rampant despoliation and waste.

During this period of learning and ferment, the Sierra Club also continued to put an essentially pragmatic strategy into action. Following their mandate to "…explore, enjoy and render accessible the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast, to publish authentic information concerning them; to enlist the support and cooperation of the people and the government in preserving the forest and other natural features of the Sierra Nevada Mountains" the Club began to organize wilderness outings for club members.[110] The outings into the Sierra Nevadas brought scores of Sierra Club members in touch with Muir's spiritual home with the intent to bring them closer to the primary qualities of nature, as well as having plain simple fun in the outdoors. With his unique and flowing literary style, Muir invited them to experience and integrate into themselves the 'love lessons' of wild nature.

> Walk away quietly in any direction and taste the freedom of the mountaineer. Camp out among the grass and gentians of glacier meadows, in craggy garden nooks full of Nature's darlings. Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Natures' peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.[111]

Although Muir's intentions through such calls to enter the healing beauty of nature are essentially anthropocentric in that the value expressed is for human use only, there is an implicit strategy within his rhetoric. National Parks may be considered "places for rest, inspiration and prayers" but the true calling was to, as he put it to his brother, go out into it, and in the "balmy sunshine…mysterious rays of beauty" and "the spray of the lower Yosemite Falls" one can truly say that they have "'got religion.'"[112] That

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an essentially anthropocentric position in the sense that wild places heal and provide aesthetic pleasure for humanity. See "The Yosemite", *EWDB*, 714.

[110] Linnie MarshWolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 254.

[111] John Muir, "Our National Parks", *EWDB*, 481.

[112] *John Muir Papers*, Series 1A, Reel 2, Frame 00806. Letter from John Muir to David Gilrye Muir, April 10, 1870.

Muir's early years in Yosemite were a culmination of a long immersion process there can be but little doubt. By his statement to his brother that he had 'got religion' lies a tacit acknowledgment that he had deeply realized an overall unity of nature; that divinity suffused all, and that he could not really hope for his brother to truly understand it, or anyone else for that matter, unless they too became baptized three times in one morning by sunshine, beauty and waterfall spray.

A true baptism in nature, Muir hoped, would encompass not only a recognition of how nature benefited man, but would provide a metaphysical basis for a major philosophical leap; from an anthropocentric worldview to the deep identification and unity with nature that anticipates contemporary ecocentricism. Muir felt that incremental steps were necessary in order to bring about this deep connection within a public deadened by the apathy of city streets and 'lowland' lifestyles. He had grown up and matured amid utilitarian ideologies, first under his father's harsh Calvinist influence on the family farm, then through the rigor of scientific studies at the University of Wisconsin, the dogged labor of cultivating the Canadian frontier, and the noise and smoke in the factories of Indianapolis. For Muir, bringing people into wild nature to allow natural forces to prevail seemed the best first step, an "awakening from the stupefying effects of the vice of over-industry and the deadly apathy of luxury" that was critical to moving towards a true relationship with and within nature.[113]

Muir's rebellion against the negative effects of industrial 'progress' and argument for a return to nature was also indicative of a simmering antimodern movement that was beginning to be felt around the end of the nineteenth century.[114] People in the middle and upper classes of America were trying to come to terms with both the material benefits of modern industrial culture, and at the same time, feeling a deep ambivalence towards secularization and the dissolution of the Protestant culture of the early to mid1800's. In the attempt to find meaning in their lives, antimodernists began to seek what T.J. Jackson Lears calls "authentic experience", a way to realize self-fulfillment through profound and intense experiences and

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[113] John Muir, "Our National Parks", *EWDB,* 459.

[114] T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920.*(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981)

'exuberant' health.[115] The movement was, however, fraught with contradiction, for through a rejection of the industrial production model and moved into a consumer culture as seekers of 'authentic experience.'[116]

Muir struggled with the dichotomy of these two tendancies. By advocating a return to nature as a counterpoint to modernist culture, he was promoting a type of consumer culture of nature. In his time, however, he could not have projected what cost this would have on the landscapes he loved, he simply saw a need in people for nature, and hoped that reconnection would bring about a cultural defence of wilderness.

In hoping for this defence of nature through reconnection, Muir saw fit to praise even the most tenuous of impulses that drew people into the wild, describing tourists and their 'scenery habit' with a curious mixture of chagrin and encouragement

> Even the scenery habit in its most artificial forms, mixed with spectacles, silliness, and kodaks; its devotees arrayed more gorgeously than scarlet tanagers, frightening the wild game with red umbrellas – even this is encouraging, and may well be regarded as a hopeful sign of the times.[117]

Here we see that Muir privately disparaged the 'scenery habit' he believed that the elemental draw to beauty, whether manifested as an instrumental value or not, but at the same time, say this as a positive tendency that he hoped would nurture a deep cultural communion with nature. As part of an 'authentic experience' the shedding of cultural angst and stress through deep immersion in the wild would, he hoped, lead to learning the songs of the rocks as well as the need to preserve the beauty of wild parks and forest reservations. It was a distinctly pragmatic approach to an ultimate metaphysical goal, one that he had experienced himself, leaving the 'dead pavements' of his winter exile in Oakland to return to the wild beauty of the Sierras and gaining back a sense of his real self.

> Civilization and fever and all the morbidness that has been hooted at me have not dimmed my glacial eye, and I care to live only to entice people to look at Nature's loveliness. My own special self is nothing. My feet have recovered their cunning, I feel myself again.

One has to be out and in it, belly to the ground, nose to flower, doused with rain-showers, sun-showers and the spray of falls to begin to become one with it all. From that sense of oneness grows a deep and abiding commitment to take action in defense of not only the beauty, but the sense of wholeness and a divinity that, to Muir, permeated the myriad beings and forms of his beloved mountain landscape. That Muir resorted to whatever practical avenues of reason, enticement, cajoling, preaching, and admonishing is quite understandable within the context of his deep conviction of the oneness of all things. His pragmatic approach was a culturally acceptable way to work towards, at the heart of things, a defense of his own self within a larger context, where his 'own special self is nothing' in the wholeness of a larger vision of creation and divine process.

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[115] Ibid. Preface, xv-xvi.

[116] Ibid.

[117] John Muir, "Our National Parks" in *EWDB*, 459

John Muir's more pragmatic and tempered approach in encouraging people to relate and identify with nature may also be seen within his method of portraying both animate and inanimate entities within nature. Within his published writing, Muir anthropomorphizes trees, animals, even landforms and processes in a purposeful attempt to foster personal identification between his reader and nature.

> …how many hearts with warm red blood in them are beating under cover of the woods, and how many teeth and eyes are shining! A multitude of animal people, intimately related to us, but of whose lives we know almost nothing, are as busy about their own affairs as we are about ours.[118]
>
> …all the rocks seemed talkative, and more telling and lovable than ever. They are dear friends, and seemed to have warm blood gushing through their granite flesh…[119]

By seeming to anthropomorphize nature Muir is attempting two things: to bring about a greater sense of feeling of relationship from his reader to these entities within nature, and also to express his own deep sense of identification and lack of ontological separation between himself and the animals, the rocks, the mountains, even the constant surge and change of natural processes.

Within his foundational belief in the unity of all things in nature, Muir sought as many ways as he could to bridge the divide between nature and humanity, and one way of accomplishing this was to allow the essence of his belief in the essential oneness with nature to shine through his writing. How he accomplished this was both of function of his religious background and his unfolding worldview. From early in his life, Muir was able to recite the entire New Testament and a good portion of the Old Testament by heart and used this ability to support his own views in arguments with his father. Muir grew so adroit at utilizing scripture to counter his father that Daniel Muir Sr. would grumble about his "contumacious quibbler" of a son.[120] However uneasy this made the relationship between father and son, it provided Muir with an ability to express and defend his personal philosophy using religious imagery and metaphorical prose, a literary ability that he later used in winning public support for preservationism.

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[118] Ibid. 465.

[119] John Muir, "Steep Trails" in *EWDB*, 877.

Perhaps the most powerful pragmatic tool at Muir's disposal was his intense interest and considerable knowledge of science, specifically in botany and geology. Although Muir never considered himself a scientist in the formal sense, he was introduced to the scientific method and various scientific disciplines during his student years at the University of Wisconsin. Here Muir studied chemistry, botany, geology, and glacial landscape formation, and learned the value of careful field observation from his teacher, Professor Ezra S. Carr.[121] Muir's use of science, specifically in glaciology, helped to make his reputation as more than an idle dabbler in the natural sciences, a feat created in no small part by his disagreement with Professor Josiah D. Whitney regarding the formation of Yosemite Valley.

As a Harvard University Professor and State Geologist of California, J. D. Whitney personified the scientific disposition of the era. "One-eyed reason, deficient in its vision of depth," Alfred North Whitehead described the modern scientific tendency, where hard facts, quantitative measurement and clear-cut definitions adhered to the Cartesian model of the universe.[122] Whitney's observations led him to assert that Yosemite Valley had been created by a cataclysmic event, whereupon the valley floor had literally dropped due lack to of support from the underlying bedrock.[123] Denying that ice had anything to do with the valley formation, and sticking to his theory of a cataclysmic origin, Whitney was indeed handicapped by one-eyed reason. Further, Whitney had not spent the time in the valley to gain the same dept of vision that Muir, in years of wandering, had soaked up through long and intimate immersion in the mountains.

To Muir, Whitney's conclusion was sheer nonsense. "Whitney says the bottom has fallen out of the rocks here – which I most devoutly disbelieve" he wrote to Jeanne Carr.[124] With publication in December

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[120] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness,* 49.

[121] Ibid. 76

[122] Alfred North Whitehead quoted in Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 316.

[123] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness,* 131.

[124] Ibid. 132.

1871 edition of the *New York Tribune*, Muir's article, "Yosemite Glaciers: The Ice Streams of the Great Valley," marked the beginning the public debate between Muir and Whitney. Fourteen geological publications later, Muir's rendition of Yosemite's origin was more or less accepted as the correct version of events.[125] This cemented Muir's reputation as a geologist, regardless of his lack of formal education, and with that came credibility and respect - two very important attributes for any individual working to sway public opinion in an era where reason and scientific theory dominated the social worldview.

For John Muir, science certainly held an important place in his life and work, but to say that Muir became a scientist, or that he even considered himself a scientist would be to neglect Muir's own ambivalence with the moniker. Contrasting his long term experiential study of the mountains with the abbreviated scientific field trips of the Whitney Survey team, Muir notes, "I did not go to them for a Saturday, or a Sunday, or a stingy week, but with unmeasured time, and independent of companions or scientific associations."[126] Further, Muir admits that science is not the impetus for his eclectic and varied study of nature, and that his wilderness wanderings have more to do with simply delving into the ineffable mysteries of nature. "Drifting about among flowers and sunshine, I am like a butterfly or bee, though not half so busy or with so sure an aim. But in the midst of these methodless rovings I seek to spell out by close inspection things not well understood. Still, in the work of grave science I make but little progress."[127] Science was a tool for Muir; simply another way of illuminating the spiritual presence in nature, the divinity he believed suffused all of nature. Perhaps the best example of Muir's relationship to science may be seen in an excerpt from Wolfe's collection of his unpublished journals.

> A bird is not feathers of certain colors, or members of a certain length – toes, claws, bill, gape, culmen – and of group so and so. This is not the bird that at heaven's gate sings, any more than man is vertical vertebrate, and five and one half feet long, with so many teeth and bones forming a right angle with the ground, though even all this is good in its way. On the rim of Yosemite I once heard a man say: 'How was this tremendous old rocky gorge formed?' "Oh, stop your science,' said another member of the party. 'Hush! Stand still and behold the glory of God!"
>
> I suppose silent wonder would have been better, more natural at first. Still, as the warmth and beauty of fire is more enjoyed by those who, knowing something of the origin of wood and coals, see the dancing flames and are able to contemplate the grand show as having come from the sun

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[125] For a discussion of Muir's impact on the geological community see "Muir and Geology" by Dennis R. Dean in *John Muir: Life and Work*, Sally Miller, ed., (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press:1990), 169-193.

[126] Michael Cohen, *The Pathless Way,* 35.

[127] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *John of the Mountains,* 108.

> ages ago, and slowly garnered in cells, so also are those Yosemite temples the more enjoyed by those who have traced, however dimly, the working of the Divine Mind in their making, who know why domes are here, and how sheer precipitous walls like El Capitan were predetermined by the crystallization of the granite in the dark, thousands of centuries before development, and who know how in the fullness of time the sun was called to lift water out of the sea in vapor which was carried by the winds to the mountains, crystallized into snow among the clouds, to fall on the summits, form glaciers, and bring Yosemite Valley and all the other Sierra features to the light. In offering us such vistas, thereby increasing our pleasure and admiration, Science is divine![128]

So, it may be ventured that the mantle of 'scientist' helped Muir to gain credibility as an 'expert' in a time when mechanistic reductionist science, preoccupied with quantitative taxonomy and definitive relations held sway within the modern mind. His articles on glaciation are still listed in a bibliography of American geology, and the publicity he gained from demolishing Whitney's cataclysmic theory won him not only public, but professional recognition as a glacier expert.[129] Melded into his unique literary style, Muir delivered his observations in such a delightful way, breathing life into otherwise dry scientific observations that this too brought about greater public exposure and appreciation. People simply enjoyed reading his work.[130]

The fledgling preservationist movement, working through the newly founded Sierra Club, benefited greatly from Muir's credibility with the public, and certainly from his literary genius. Prodded continually during the late 1880's by his friend and editor of the *Century*, Robert Underwood Johnson, to take up the pen and fight to save Yosemite, Muir finally capitulated and wrote two articles supporting a Yosemite park proposal. Published in the *Century* in August and September of 1890, they included a map of Muir's proposed park boundaries. The Yosemite bill passed with surprising alacrity within two short days and was signed October 1st, 1890 by President Harrison.[131] The new park had been greatly enlarged from its first inception, the boundaries bearing a marked similarity to Muir's map. This stunning victory, following close behind his first published articles in eight years solidified Muir's return to the public's attention. Muir became a focal point for the proponents for preservation, the spiritual leader of the movement to safeguard the wild beauty of the Sierras.

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[128] Ibid. 437-8.

[129] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness,* 153. In 1871, Joseph Le Conte, Professor of Geology at the University of California, C.L. Merriam of the Smithsonian Institute, John D. Runkle, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and long time friend Mrs. Carr urged Muir to write his glacial theory and observations.

[130] Ray Stannard Baker, "John Muir", *The Outlook,* June 6, 1903. *John Muir Papers*, Holt Atherton Department of Special Collections, University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA. "Muir writes with rare charm and simplicity, his descriptions of natural beauty abounding in delicate sentiment and poetic feeling."

[131] See Holway R. Jones, "John Muir, the Sierra Club and the Formulation of the Wilderness Concept" in *The World of John Muir*, Pacific Historian eds., (Stockton: Holt-Atherton Pacific Center for Western Studies, University of the Pacific, 1981), 64 – 78.

Muir's contribution to the Sierra Club and the preservationist movement was foundational to its early success. People joined the Sierra Club because he was at the helm, and asked if he would be present on the Club's summer Sierra excursions before committing to participate. From a practical standpoint, the outings, and Muir's participation, provided an educational and a social element that rapidly increased membership.[132] Muir had gained a mythic role and used it to good effect.

Walking into the halls of state government, Muir also made many trips to Sacramento and San Francisco to hammer home the need for preservation of the High Sierra, whether it had to do with Yosemite, King's Canyon or putting brakes on the "mere destroyers…tree-killers, wool and mutton men, spreading death and confusion in the fairest groves and gardens ever planted…"[133] His name opened doors and led to his meeting both the politically powerful and the scientific elite. Many of these people, including President T.R. Roosevelt; Edward H. Harriman, Southern Pacific Railroad magnate; Dr. C. Hart Merriam, Chief of the U.S. Biological Survey; Professor Charles S. Sargent, director of the Arnold Arboretum at Harvard; Asa Grey, Harvard botanist; Joseph Le Conte, Professor of Geology at the University of California, and even the venerable transcendentalist of Concord, Ralph Waldo Emerson, became Muir's friends and took great personal interest in his work. Many of these gentlemen also provided invaluable support for Muir's preservationist cause.

President T.R. Roosevelt met John Muir on a political junket to the West in 1903. As an ardent conservationist and member of the Boone and Crockett Club, Roosevelt was well aware of Muir's writing and insisted on spending time with him in Yosemite. "I do not want anyone with me but you, and I want to drop politics absolutely for four days, and just be out in the open with you."[134] Camping under the stars in Yosemite without any presidential entourage, the two men talked late into the night, awakening one morning to snow on their blankets. For Roosevelt it was a welcome change from the banqueting crowds of lobbyists, for Muir, it was an opportunity to do some good for the forests and mountains he loved. Having 'stuffed' the President with accounts of forest destruction at the hands of unscrupulous lumbermen and developers, Muir pressed the preservationist agenda for recession of Yosemite Valley from state control and for protection of the Sierra forests.

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[132] Stephen Fox, *American Conservation Movement*, 120.

[133] John Muir, "Our National Parks", *EWDB,* 604.

[134] *John Muir Papers,* Series IA, Reel 13, frame 07541. Letter from T.R. Roosevelt to John Muir, March 27, 1903.

Although initially uneasy meeting Edward H. Harriman, the powerful eastern financier and owner of the Southern Pacific Railroad during the Harriman Expedition to Alaska in 1899, Muir gradually warmed to the magnate and the two became the most unlikely of friends. Harriman's influence in California politics through the railroad lobby played a large part in the success of Muir's campaign for recession of Yosemite Valley from state to federal control. As Stephen Fox notes, the whole process was "…inspired by Johnson, powered by Harriman and signed by Roosevelt. Muir, personal friend to each, was the common element among the sponsors of recession."[135]

Early successes notwithstanding, the Sierra Club and John Muir would face their greatest challenge with the proposed damming of the Hetch-Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park. During the 1890's, the city of San Francisco, hoping to circumvent a monopolistic water utility company, proposed damming the Hetch-Hetchy Valley to secure a public water and hydroelectric utility. Like a many-headed hydra, the proposal was beheaded four times, only to surface again.[136] The Hetch-Hetchy controversy would mark the final political and ideological division between aesthetic preservationists and utilitarian conservationists. It was here, in the prolonged battle to save the Hetch-Hetchy Valley that Muir, Johnson and many (but not all) of the Sierra Club membership worked hard to galvanize the public to protest the dam proposal.

The preservationist's Hetch-Hetchy defence was founded on both ethical and aesthetic grounds. In an era where the dominant utilitarian worldview was only starting to be questioned, preservationists were limited by what the public could or would accept as defensible argument for the wilderness values inherent in the Hetch-Hetchy. If they were to have any real impact with the public, the preservationists would have to take a pragmatic approach, with solid and 'reasonable' counter-arguments to the dam proponents.

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[135] Stephen Fox, *American Conservation Movement*, 128.

[136] See Stephen Fox, *American Conservation Movement*, 139-47, and Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 162-81, for accounts of the Hetch-Hetchy Valley controversy.

Muir brought the preservationist campaign to the public with an article in *The Outlook*, lauding the beauty of the valley, "...I have always called it the Tuolumne Yosemite, for it is a wonderfully exact counterpart to the great Yosemite, not only in its crystal river and sublime rocks and waterfalls, but in the gardens, groves and meadows of its flowery park-like floor."[137] Muir followed glowing description with the crux of his argument – that people required the beauty of nature just as much as they required physical sustenance, and that wild nature provided a place for recreation, healing, and spiritual health.[138] The implication buried in Muir's argument for Hetch-Hetchy was that the nation needed a balance to the avaricious pursuit of the dollar – it needed to provide a foil to rampant commercialism and the "...vice of over-industry and the deadly apathy of luxury" and doom people to lives "...choked with care like clocks full of dust, laboriously doing so much good and making so much money – or so little – they are no longer good for themselves."[139] The preservation of wild nature was for Muir, the best way to provide a healthy counterbalance to the ills of modern society.

In a letter to Theodore Roosevelt dated April 21st, 1908 regarding the proposed damming of the Hetch-Hetchy Valley, Muir refutes the arguments of the dam's proponents point by point. In response to the proponents claim that there were thousands of other places in the Sierras as beautiful as Hetch-Hetchy, Muir replies that there is not another valley like it except Yosemite. To the complaints regarding inaccessibility and mosquito infestation, Muir replies that the valley is accessible all year, and that the mosquitoes are no more plentiful than at Yosemite. With the proponents statement that the dam will simply replace a meadow with a beautiful lake, Muir unleashes a moral dictum. "These sacred mountain temples are the holiest ground that the heart of man has consecrated, and it behooves us all faithfully to do our part in seeing that our wild mountain parks are passed on unspoiled to those who come after us, for they are national properties in which every man has a right and interest."[140]

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[137] W. F Kimes and Maymie B. Kimes, *John Muir: A Reading Bibliography*, 75. From John Muir, "The Tuolumne Yosemite in Danger" *The Outlook*, v. 87, no. 9, November 2, 1907.

[138] Ibid. 75.

[139] John Muir, "Our National Parks", in *EWDB*, 459.

[140] W.F. Badè, "The Life and Letters of John Muir" in *John Muir: His Life and Letters and Other Writings*, Terry Gifford, ed., (Seattle, The Mountaineers, 1996) 378-9. Letter from John Muir to Theodore Rooseveldt, Martinez, California, April 21, 1908.

When viewed in total, the preservationist's argument against the damming of Hetch-Hetchy boiled down to four main points. Beauty, recreation, spirituality (religion), and a rejection of rampant utilitarianism – "ravaging commercialism" as Muir called it, which attempts to "make everything dollarable."[141] Helping Muir from the east coast, his old friend, Robert Underwood Johnson, referred to the utilitarian mindset as a " 'pseudo'- practical stage" which "is one of the retarding influences of American civilization and brings us back to the materialistic declaration that 'Good is only good to eat.'"[142] However, it is worth noting here that all arguments made by the preservationist cause were also distinctly anthropocentric – each professed to provide something for people. Beauty was to be sought out and enjoyed by people, recreation was a positive influence for the physical and mental well being of people, and a person's spiritual or religious life would be nurtured and given deeper meaning through wandering "God's wilds." Even the rejection of single-minded utilitarianism came with a caveat, "I am heartily in favour of a Sierra or even a Tuolumne water supply for San Francisco, but all the water can be obtained from sources outside the park" wrote Muir to Roosevelt in 1908.[143] It would remain to be seen whether the scope of these arguments against the Hetch-Hetchy development would realize a favorable outcome for the John Muir and the preservationist movement.

The preservationist's campaign to save the Hetch-Hetchy Valley drew an unprecedented response from the public. Congress was swamped with letters; newspapers and magazines supported the cause with numerous editorials. As a result, the dam proposal was defeated by a vote in Congress in February, 1909. However, the hydra refused to be vanquished, and with passing of the Roosevelt administration, to that of President Taft in 1908 and then to President Woodrow Wilson in 1912, political infielders, including Gifford Pinchot, continued to press the issue in favor of San Francisco's bid for the Hetch-Hetchy dam. A final vote by the Senate in favor of the development finally closed the interminable battle over Hetch-Hetchy on December 6th, 1913. It was a bitter defeat for the preservationist movement, despite all the best efforts of John Muir, Robert Underwood Johnson, William Colby, and the thousands of now awakened wilderness advocates across the country.[144]

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[141] Kimes, *John Muir: A Reading Bibliography*, 75. See John Muir, "The Tuolumne Yosemite in Danger", *The Outlook*, November 2, 1907 and "The Hetch-Hetchy Valley" *The Sierra Club Bulletin*, January 1908.

[142] Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 165.

[143] W.F. Badè, "The Life and Letters of John Muir" in *John Muir: His Life and Letters and Other Writings*, Terry Gifford, ed., 378-9.

Reducing the Hetch-Hetchy battle to, as Pinchot stated, a practical debate regarding the relative 'advantage' of leaving the valley in its natural state versus providing benefits for the city of San Francisco, was in essence circumventing the values that Muir believed to be embedded within nature.[145] Faced with a moral quandary of deciding between the 'good' of wilderness for recreation, beauty and spirituality and the 'good' of providing water for the city of San Francisco, a utilitarian decision in favor of the dam was almost a foregone conclusion. It was, once again, a decision over the "greatest good for the greatest number" and by framing their own arguments into utilitarian premises, John Muir and the preservationist cause were handicapped from the outset.

As Nash notes, the preservationists made a tactical error by not defending the essential quality of wilderness.[146] Instead, they became embroiled in a fight over whether Hetch-Hetchy was of better service to the public as a meadow or a lake or whether a playground for tourists outweighed water for washing laundry and dishes. Defending the wilderness values of Hetch-Hetchy, muses Nash, would have made it apparent to the public that "*any* man-made construction." would ruin the essential wild beauty of the valley.[147] Contemporary 20/20 hindsight notwithstanding, it is important to remember that Muir and the Sierra Club functioned in an era where the word 'ecology' had not come into common use, and Muir's foundational philosophy of unity and divinity suffusing all of nature as a defence for the valley would have been greeted with outright skepticism if not derision in the political halls of power.

Following this same train of thought, John Muir was further handicapped in the Hetch-Hetchy fight by the limits of the language he could use to explain his position. Muir's use of religious metaphor in his impassioned defence of Hetch-Hetchy was both a tactic and a natural outreach of deeply held beliefs. Muir's use of Christian imagery in his naturalist articles had helped him achieve a growing appreciative readership. It was more acceptable in Muir's time than today to write with religious overtones, even to the secular masses, however, when it came to a point of government policy, Muir's use of religious metaphor led to perceptions of impracticality and religious zealotry. Particularly strong in tone and intent, Muir's article "The Hetch-Hetchy Valley" published in the *Sierra Club Bulletin*, January 1908, is indicative of his use of religious language to drill home the outrage he felt at what was, to him, essentially a blasphemous and arrogant endeavor.

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[144] Both Johnson and Colby provided invaluable support for Muir in the protracted fight for the Hetch-Hetchy Valley. Johnson wrote numerous editorials in *The Century*, and William Colby, at this time Secretary of the Sierra Club worked ceaselessly to help Muir safeguard Yosemite National Park.

[145] Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 170.

[146] Ibid. 170.

[147] Ibid. 170.

> These temple destroyers, devotees of ravaging commercialism, seem to have a perfect contempt for Nature, and instead of lifting their eyes to the mountains, lift them to dams and town skyscrapers. Dam Hetch-Hetchy! As well dam for water-tanks the people's cathedrals and churches, for no holier temple has ever been consecrated by the heart of man."[148]

Granted, the Sierra Club had by this time been arguing on a strictly utilitarian level, and Muir was close to the end of his tether with the 'practicality' of it all. Buried in religious metaphors is the crux of Muir's deep conviction about the true value of wilderness; as an incalculable expression of divinity in nature and beyond the arrogant appropriation of commercial interests. Muir obscured this central conviction, rightly or wrongly, for he felt the need to temper the radical nature of his own heart deep beliefs in this battle for the Hetch-Hetchy Valley.[149] The dam proponents reaction to this, of course, was to label the preservationist cause as overtly sentimental, impractical, and a bunch of pleasure-loving "hoggish and mushy esthetes" who were certainly not in touch with the reality of the basic human need for a safe and secure water supply.[150]

Hetch-Hetchy was lost. In a letter to friends, Muir was battle weary and reflective. "The battle has lasted twelve years, from Pinchot and Company to President Wilson, and the wrong has prevailed over the best aroused sentiment of the whole country. Fortunately wrong cannot last; soon or late[er] it must fall back home to Hades, while some compensating good must surely follow."[151] Muir was indeed correct, for the compensating good was that the prolonged controversy had aroused the sentiment of the whole country – a sentiment that embraced the beauty and necessity of wilderness. Another 'good' was that the process actually took such a long time to come to its final, if lamentable, end. Precedent setting, the intensity and length of the public debate spawned a realization, to the public and to the politicians, that the mantra of technological progress and utilization of nature for the 'greatest good for the greatest number' would not continue to go on unquestioned. Though Muir and the Sierra Club lost the valley, the preservationist movement had truly come into its own as a national political and environmental force.

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[148] Kimes, *John Muir: A Reading Bibliography*, 75. See John Muir, "The Hetch-Hetchy Valley" in the *Sierra Club Bulletin*, v.6, no.4, Jan., 1908. See also John Muir, "The Yosemite", *EWDB*, 711-16.

[149] Patricia Anne Roberts, "John Muir and the Hetch-Hetchy Debate: A Study of the Demise of the Sublime in American Policy Rhetoric" (Ph.D diss., University of California, Berkely, 1987). Roberts argues that Muir was seriously hampered in his ability to argue for Hetch-Hetchy by the contemporary senses of appropriate discourse, which in turn results in seriously flawed public discussion. Muir's defence of Hetch-Hetchy was ignored, and the policy decision was made on "unnecessarily limited grounds." 166.

[150] Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 169.

John Muir - Environmental Pragmatist or Ecocentric Strategist?

Is it possible that the life and work of John Muir may provide relevant points for consideration in the contemporary debate between those advocating environmental pragmatism (moral pluralism) and the case made for an ethics of intrinsic value (moral monism)?[152] Although John Muir lived long before this particular contemporary discourse, his life and work furnish, in true Muirian form, interesting points of reference for this current debate within environmental ethics. Central to this discussion lie three points of inquiry. Was John Muir's preservationism foundationally pragmatic in intent and application? Did John Muir embrace a moral pluralist position at a foundational philosophical level? And, did Muir utilize applied philosophy (applying a philosophical principle to derive appropriate policy) and/or practical philosophy (philosophical theories and principles that are developed from the attempt to resolve a specific policy problem) within his preservationist strategy?

In order to truly address these questions, it is important to note the criticisms and positions from both the moral pluralist and moral monist points of view. It is also important to note, that although I, for the most part, outline the positions of J. Baird Callicott and Bryan G. Norton, these two positions are not to be construed as the totality of debate in either the moral monist or moral pluralist views within contemporary environmental ethics.[153] These two philosophers, however, provide many of the foundational arguments and positions for each philosophical view, from which I may bring the life and work of John Muir into focus with reference to the questions listed above.[154]

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[151] W.F. Badè, "The Life and Letters of John Muir" in *John Muir: His Life and Letters and other Writings*, Terry Gifford, ed., 363. Letter from John Muir to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Fairfield Osborn, Martinez, January 4, 1914.

[152] For the purposes of this discussion, I restrict the moral monist position to that of J. Baird Callicott's 'inherent value' position of ecocentricism in that environmental pragmatists feel that debate with Callicott is sufficient to encompass all moral monist positions as he 'claims less than other non-anthropocentric theories.' See Bryan Norton, "Integration or Reduction" in *Environmental Pragmatism*, 109-10. Further discussion regarding other moral monist positions besides Callicott's will be addressed later in this chapter.

Environmental pragmatists holding a moral pluralist position have challenged the moral monist position of J. Baird Callicott with a number of specific criticisms, which I have condensed into four main points. The first criticism stems from the environmental pragmatist's view that within the relatively new field of environmental ethics, the moral monist view has dominated philosophical debate. This, they feel, is a grave problem when the "necessary period of ferment, cultural experimentation, and *multi*-vocality is only *beginning.*"[155] For environmental pragmatists, the apparent single-minded preoccupation with the theory of inherent/intrinsic value within environmental philosophy is far too limiting to address the diversity of views emerging within the discipline of environmental ethics.

Secondly, environmental pragmatists charge Callicott with working with applied rather than practical philosophy, where moral monist theory (centred on the belief of intrinsic value in nature) is applied to an environmental issue, using a 'universalist' approach. This approach, as Norton attests is "attractive to philosophers who hope to resolve environmental problems by throwing fully formed general principles over the edge of the ivory tower to be used as intellectual armaments by the currently outgunned environmental activists…"[156] For instance, a 'universalist' approach, as per Norton's view, could be seen in the spotted owl controversy in the Pacific Northwest, where the intrinsic value of the owl and its habitat were foundational to many of the anti-logging activists' justification for action. Instead of applying such a moral monist philosophical approach, Norton would rather use practical philosophy, a problem-oriented approach that uses philosophical theories as tools to solve any given environmental issue. Practical philosophy, in Norton's view, adheres to the pragmatic premise that "all value emerges from experience," and appropriate theory comes from struggling with the practical implications for resolution of specific real life cases, not vice versa.[157] Further, Norton asserts that "if all disputants agree on central management principles, even without agreeing on ultimate values, management can proceed on those principles."[158] For Norton, this appears to be the crux of his disagreement with applied philosophy, and his advocacy for the efficacy of practical philosophy.

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[153] At this date, Bryan G. Norton is Professor of Philosophy in the School of Public Policy, Georgia Institute of Technology, and J. Baird Callicott is Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of North Texas.

[154] It is important to note at this point that within the range of moral monist environmental philosophies, Callicott advances his own interpretation of Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic – a holistic, communitarian moral philosophy. Norton also is but one advocate for environmental pragmatism. While differing in some ways from their respective peers within the moral monist or moral pluralist schools, each posit foundational philosophical values of their respective schools of thought. For the purposes of this discussion I work only from these common points of reference.

[155] Anthony Weston, "Before Environmental Ethics" in *Environmental Pragmatism*, Andrew Light and Eric Katz, eds., 151.

[156] Bryan Norton, "Integration or Reduction" in *Environmental Pragmatism*, 110.

The third major criticism of moral monism by those advocating an environmental pragmatist approach is that a monistic philosophy cannot possibly take into account the plurality of people's values, nor the fluidity and variety of human relationship with the natural world. Therefore, when problems erupt between differing moral theories, there is, apparently, a regrettable tendency to dissolve into a theoretical impasse. This impasse results in freezing any practical resolution of environmental issues. As Norton asserts, moral monism is "… the wrong strategy at the wrong time, given that it allows decisive intervention in public policy formation only after a single, unified moral principle is articulated and agreed upon, an outcome that seems unlikely in the foreseeable future."[159]

Finally, the fourth major criticism of moral monism is that it posits a conceptual assumption; an assumption, believes Norton, that the axiology of environmental ethics (a systemization of moral intuitions resulting in principles that inform moral action) must include the question of what exactly in nature has moral standing. Norton goes on to state that by addressing the question of moral standing, moral monists intend not only to specify what objects in nature are morally considerable, but also provide the necessary motivation to protect natural objects. Again, Norton charges, "Any morally committed environmentalist ought always to act so as to maximize the protection of inherent value, wherever it occurs. Monistic, non-anthropocentric theory can on these conditions rival economists in universalism."[160] What is central to Norton's concern is that the foundational value within moral monism of intrinsic value, or inherent value, is too reductionistic and curtails the plurality of social and individual concepts of nature, and insists on conformity before resolving practical issues.[161]

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[157] Kelly A. Parker, "Pragmatism and Environmental Thought" in *Environmental Pragmatism*, 25.

[158] Bryan Norton, "Integration or Reduction", 108.

[159] Ibid. 109.

To these four criticisms, J. Baird Callicott has defended the case for moral monism.[162] While much of what is central to Callicott's position is included in the following discussion, the life and work of John Muir is also discussed with reference to criticisms of moral monism posited in contemporary environmental pragmatism. There is some congruency between Callicott's moral monist position and the struggle Muir waged on both the philosophical and practical action levels in his life and work, but first, a review Callicott's answer to the criticisms of moral monism is required.

The Homogenization of Environmental Philosophy

To the four points of criticism of the moral monist position, J. Baird Callicott has provided his own views and criticisms of the moral pluralist position. In response to the criticism that moral monism has dominated philosophical debate, the debate between the moral monist and moral pluralist positions has been active for over a decade and thus renders this criticism moot. A perusal of the *Journal of Environmental Ethics* testifies to the range of discourse in environmental philosophy, not to mention the surfeit of anthologies, books and peer reviewed articles that speak to the openness and diversity of academic discussion in environmental philosophy.

It is important to note that Callicott views the ongoing debate as being a natural part of the current constructive and deconstructive postmodern philosophical ferment. He sees the critical deconstruction of the modernist worldview, and the constructive debate involving diverse postmodern ideas and worldviews as necessary in the postmodern era. Further, Callicott is not against moral pluralism in all applications of the term, "...what I call 'interpersonal moral pluralism'...is a very good and healthy thing. In this good and healthy climate of interpersonal moral pluralism, each moral philosopher has not only a right but a duty to argue that his or her preferred moral theory is superior to all others…that it uniquely takes account of all the relevant considerations and does so self-consistently."[163] What Callicott takes issue with is what he calls 'intrapersonal' moral pluralism, where an individual adopts one theory to guide action in *this* moral quandary, and then another for a *different* moral quandary and yet another for *another* quandary.[164] This implies, to Callicott, "intrapersonal inconsistency and self-contradiction."[165]

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[160] Ibid. 110.

[161] Ibid. 109.

[162] J. Baird Callicott, "Moral Monism in Environmental Ethics Defended" in *Beyond the Land Ethic*, 171-87.

Consistency is, according to Callicott, indicative of an examined life and critical to philosophical rigor. A rigor that he feels is not present in the multi-vocality of moral pluralism. "Moral pluralism, in short, implies metaphysical musical chairs. I think however, that we human beings deeply need and mightily strive for consistency, coherency, and closure in our personal and shared outlook on the world and on ourselves in relation to the world and to one another."[166] Lack of consistency in the moral pluralist approach therefore creates havoc when pluralities of ethically incommensurable principles end up in conflict in a given situation. What to do then? Without a personally 'true' metaphysical moral intuition/source/vision in which to ground our attempts to create sound moral principles that back action, we are left with no rudder to navigate the storm of competing principles and their implications for action. Intrapersonal moral pluralism in this context then, would lead to relativism, where, as Canadian philosopher John Ralston Saul, states "… there are no choices, only process and interest. It leads you to (the) disastrous formula of "situational ethics", which perfectly described the new managerial, instrumental approach towards power."[167]

Process and interest, with no choices, leading to instrumental utilitarian power—sounds rather like John Muir's juggernaut in the Hetch-Hetchy battle. Muir also attempted to de-homogenize philosophical debate in utilitarian dominated public process through invoking the 'nature as God's temple' imagery, however, as noted earlier, he was severely limited in his ability to clearly voice the wellspring of his thought – intrinsic value and deep spirituality embedded and suffusing all of nature. His attempt to voice this deep conviction, clothed in religious terms, was ultimately unsuccessful in saving Hetch-Hetchy. Nonetheless, he did try, and his failure to bring the essence of intrinsic value as a credible ethic into an environmental policy process is continually relived by environmentalists today. Even Rachel Carson, credited with having inspired the contemporary environmental movement with her seminal book, *Silent Spring*, was successful because she tempered the rhetoric of intrinsic value with impeccable science, and advanced the intrinsic value of human beings and clean air, clean water and healthy ecosystems which help *us.*[168] As Neil Evernden has noted, Carson faced a dilemma in the "way cultural premises dictate the very mode of communication an individual must select if he or she wishes to be taken seriously." It is, Evernden continued, "…a very subtle form of censorship."[169] Personally, I wouldn't call it all that subtle.

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[163] J. Baird Callicott, *Beyond the Land Ethic*, 10.

[164] Callicott contests the moral pluralist perspective of Christopher Stone, who posits his argument in *Earth and Other Ethics: A Case for Moral Pluralism*, (New York: Harper & Rowe, 1987).

[165] Ibid. 10, 173.

[166] J. Baird Callicott, "The Case Against Moral Pluralism", *Beyond the Land Ethic*, 160.

[167] John Ralston Saul, *On Equilibrium*, (Toronto: Penguin Group, 2001), 91.

Why this censorship? It stems, according to Evernden, from a deep-seated fear of contaminating the purity and sanctity of our social concept of nature. A 'pollution' occurs in bringing forth ideas and values that threaten society's chosen conceptions of nature, and since pollution is a risk, it should be excised. Rachel Carson, and Muir in his time, knew what the social reaction to expressions of intrinsic value would be; that they would be denigrated, castigated, labeled overtly emotional, anthropomorphic or even misanthropic. The concept of intrinsic value challenged Cartesian dualism and utilitarian progressive social worldview, and in Muir's as well as Carson's time, this "threaten[ed] to attack a system at its intellectual base.[170] A perceived attack is met with fear, resistance and pitched effort to disempower the source of social intellectual 'pollution.'

In reaction to the perceived attack on the dominant technological, utilitarian social intellectual base of his time, John Muir ran a gauntlet of spurious attacks. Muir and the Sierra Club were called "misinformed nature lovers."[171] His credentials were attacked, "I showed how far out of the way John Muir was in his statements, much as we all appreciated him as poet and word artist, but that he could not speak with the authority of a sanitary engineer."[172] From his friend, William Kent, who had personally dedicated 45 acres of threatened coastal redwoods for preservation and named them *Muir Woods,* an apology for Muir's supposed social ignorance, "...for he is a man entirely without social sense. With him, it is me and God and the rock where God put it, and that is the end of the story."[173] An accusation of misanthropy, leveled at Muir, is still a dominant grievance against contemporary environmental activists. "I am sure he would sacrifice his own family for the preservation of beauty. He considers human life very cheap, and he considers the works of God superior" wrote former San Francisco mayor and dam proponent, James Phelan.[174] What was perhaps even more indicative of the predominant utilitarian progressive mindset in Muir's day was the division of opinion regarding the Hetch-Hetchy protest within the Sierra Club. One of the Club founders, Warren Olney, actively supported the dam. He was not alone in his position, 160 out of 589 Club members in favor of the project joined Olney.[175] The resulting rift in the Sierra Club prompted the creation of an ad hoc group led by Muir and Club Secretary, William Colby, in order to work freely for the preservation of national parks.

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[168] Neil Evernden, "Nature in Industrial Society" in *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*, Susan J. Armstrong and Richard G. Botzler, eds., (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1993), 211.

[169] Ibid. 212.

[170] Mary Douglas, noted anthropologist, as quoted in Neil Evernden, "Nature in Industrial Society", 212.

[171] Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 174.

It was difficult for Muir to keep his deeply felt personal values about nature in the forefront of his political work in the face of personal attacks and a dominant utilitarian progressive worldview, but it also strengthened his resolve. Cohen called Muir's political work in the last twenty years of his life "self-effacing," and that his "philosophy was lost as 'preservation' took on an institutional and organizational form in the Sierra Club. The speaker of the King Sequoia letter was left behind."[176] Perhaps this is too harsh. What is more likely is Muir melded the young man who wandered the granite pavements of the High Sierra in ecstatic communion with King Sequoia into a tenacious and wise philosopher who kept 'pegging away,' fighting for parks and wilderness. Conceivably, he tapped the powerful essence of his own spiritual truth and used it to fire the long and arduous battle for Hetch-Hetchy, the Grand Canyon, King's Canyon, and the forest reservations. Like Rachel Carson, John Muir did the best that he could at the time. Muir no more lost his wilderness mystical center-of-being in the morass of dirty politics than Rachel Carson lost her personal conviction of "nature-as-self" by carefully crafting the powerful *Silent Spring*.

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[172] Patricia Ann Roberts, "John Muir and Hetch-Hetchy Debate: A Study of the Demise of the Sublime in American Policy Rhetoric," 1987. Letter from Caroline Sherman to Marsden Manson, October 15, 1909 regarding a speech she gave at the Chicago Women's Club.

[173] Stephen Fox, *American Conservation Movement,* 144.

[174] Ibid. 142.

[175] Ibid. 144.

[176] Michael Cohen, *The Pathless Way,* 278, 280.

The problem with this strategic tempering of environmental values in the public domain, as Evernden and other environmental ethicists have intimated, is that the essence of what is the core of environmental moral philosophy, *what really matters* to so many deep and gifted thinkers, has still not effectively been brought into the public sphere of moral considerability. From John Muir to Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson and such contemporary figures as Arne Naess, J. Baird Callicott, Holmes Rolston III and Warwick Fox – each has attempted to bring about a deeper consideration of their own views on intrinsic value. Through these efforts, each of these philosophers has thus contributed to the de-homogenization of environmental philosophy. So it appears that the environmental pragmatist's criticism of 'homogenizing' contemporary environmental philosophy is moot – the debate carries on and intrinsic value has become just one concept, albeit an important one – of the current debate.

Applied versus Practical Philosophy: a lesson from Muir

Muir's life and work also provides commentary on the environmental pragmatist position of how to effectively work with theoretical and metatheoretical pluralism utilizing practical philosophy approaches. In this section of my discussion, I outline Norton's preference for practical philosophy, Callicott's argument for an applied moral monist approach, and then a discussion of whether or not Muir used practical philosophy, and/or took the applied philosophical approach in his life and work.

Bryan Norton feels that practical philosophy, where principles for sound management practices arise from wrestling with environmental issues, is the best method to arrive at resolution to policy problems. In Norton's view, instead of imposing restrictions on practical choices through applied moral monism, he advocates utilizing practical philosophy to assess, agree upon, and implement a plurality of approaches to resolve pressing environmental issues.

For Norton, applied philosophy is academically elitist, simplistically limiting, and highly impractical. Further, he believes that through using practical philosophy recognition of the plurality of environmental views that resides in the public may be brought into the debate. Applied moral monism, therefore, excludes the pluralistic nature of society's views by dictating an overarching moral theory to which all discussion and resolution to environmental ills must adhere.

To address these concerns, let us first take a look at the concept of pluralism, and then see whether it is included in the positions of those advocating environmental moral monism.

The concept of pluralism has recently been described as embracing "... the validity of diverse knowledges and positions, that then opens the political process to positions previously excluded, and that is more able to confront changes in the nature of power, capital, and political oversight of environmental problems."[177] If Norton's criticism of moral monism as too simplistic and incapable of dealing with the complexity of environmental problems is correct, then advocates of moral monism would not recognize the validity of diverse environmental values and knowledge residing in people and society. A close reading of Callicott and other advocates of moral monism negates this view.

As outlined in the previous section, Callicott has readily encouraged philosophical discourse, but is also unabashedly clear that his particular Leopoldian, holistic communitarian theory of moral philosophy is the best and most workable contemporary environmental theory, and is willing to convince others that this is the case. Whether one agrees with him on fine points of his theory is beyond the scope of this study, but what is important is that Callicott, acting as an advocate of moral monism, does not negate the diversity of positions and knowledge of others. "Philosophy, including ethics, can flourish only if a variety of points of view may be freely expressed and debated."[178] Therefore, pluralism is embraced at the level of interpersonal points of view, as described above, and through a plurality of ethical principles within his moral monist philosophy.

An ethic, explains Callicott, is "...a set of behavioral rules, or a set of principles or precepts for governing behavior." Principles for governing behavior spring from the metaphysical implications of what

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[177] David Schlosberg, "Challenging Pluralism: Environmental Justice and the Evolution of Pluralist Practice" in *The Ecological Community: Environmental Challenges for Philosophy, Politics, and Morality*, Roger S. Gottleib, ed., (New York, Routledge, 1997), 284.

[178] J. Baird Callicott, "Moral Monism in Environmental Ethics Defended" in *Beyond the Land Ethic*, 175.

Callicott calls "moral sentiments" – or an intuitive metaphysical moral philosophy.[179] As Callicott explains "The univocal theoretical foundations of the land ethic naturally generate multiple sets of moral duties – and correlative maxims, principles, and precepts – each related to a particular social scale (family, republic, global village, biotic community, for a parallel example) all within a single moral philosophy." [180] Principles for action, while remaining true to the intent of the moral philosophy that underpins them, are then able to support a plurality of practical applications. Callicott's moral monist position then, is a case of applied philosophy, where the metaphysical moral philosophy provides the foundation for ethical principles, which then can be used to work towards practical actions. Callicott's use in this case of applied philosophy is distinctly different than the 'situational ethics' aspect of practical philosophy as described by Norton in that it provides a 'the buck stops here' grounding premise when it comes down to very difficult choices for environmental policy and action.

Callicott also views Norton's application of practical philosophy as both cynical and narrowly anthropocentric.[181] Pointing to Norton's research work with the 'big ten' environmental organizations immersed in lobbying and 'deal making' in Washington, Callicott takes issue with Norton's view that a more appropriate role for philosophers is to provide rationalization for the refinement of anthropocentrically generated environmental policy.[182] "Reasons come first, policies second, not the other way around" states Callicott.[183]

The role of philosophers, Callicott believes, is to give voice to the intuitive thoughts and feelings that emerge from an ever-changing social/cultural milieu, and this includes the intuition of intrinsic value in nature. Applied philosophy is, therefore, in Callicott's view, a critical part of contemporary environmental activism in that it provides fully articulated ideas that have the power to change cultural worldviews and ethos.[184] Such ideas suffuse the work of "...philosophers such as Thoreau, Muir, Leopold and Rolston [who] give voice to the otherwise inchoate and inarticulate thoughts and feelings in our changing cultural *Zeitgeist*."[185] These thoughts and feelings are as diverse as people are diverse, and applied philosophy must take into account this diversity within environmental ethics – there is in this a deep recognition of the plurality of people and their ways of being.

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[179] J. Baird Callicott, "Holistic Environmental Ethics and the Problem of Ecofacism" in *Beyond the Land Ethic*, 62.

[180] Ibid. 72.

[181] J. Baird Callicott, "Environmental Philosophy is Environmental Activism", in *Beyond the Land Ethic*, 32. See also David Schlosberg's critique of conventional environmental pluralism as practiced by Washington based environmental lobbyists, which has led to a lack of diversity in ideas and participants, and a profound disconnection with the grassroots environmental movement, in "Challenging Pluralism" in *The Ecological Community*, 272 – 275.

[182] Ibid. 32.

[183] Ibid.

In a concession to the environmental pragmatist's concerns, however, Callicott does agree that we do not have the luxury of waiting for an integrated nonanthropocentric, holistic environmental ethic to be fully recognized and part of a majority worldview, rather, environmentalists must work from where people are at this time.[186] "Start where you are and do what you can" recognizes the need to persuade people, wherever they are on the environmental ethics spectrum, to work in some way towards resolution of environmental issues.[187] However, Callicott warns, this is no reason to stop the philosophical exploration of the 'real reasons, the best reasons' of why we should work towards the cultural acceptance, in the evolution of environmental ethics, of intrinsic value in/of the biosphere. Bryan Norton has engaged in many discussions with J. Baird Callicott, and notes, "I have learned much from our discussion, and have concluded that Callicott and I agree on most practical issues of management, but that we cannot agree regarding the theoretical foundations of environmental ethics."[188]

During his working years as writer and environmental activist, John Muir would certainly have agreed with the practicality of 'start where you are and do what you can.' He really did not have a choice, as there was not an 'environmental movement' per se until he helped form the Sierra Club in 1892. That the seminal power of his ideas grounded the fledgling preservationist movement, which in turn created the schism from progressive utilitarian conservation is a matter of record. In this, Muir used applied philosophy. Taking his own deep convictions of the essential unity and divinity he knew to reside in nature, he worked out a conceptual criticism of the dominant utilitarian mindset, and with the help of others, created and articulated a philosophical view different from mainstream conservationists. However, Muir also worked with practical philosophical methods as a management strategy, considering the plurality of ideas and solutions that emerged from wrestling with each new environmental challenge, literally from the ground up. He had to. The entire field of endeavor of environmental activism was uncharted territory – Muir was blazing the first trails on a map that an entire tradition of environmental activists have since referred to and learned from.

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[184] J. Baird Callicott, "Environmental Philosophy is Environmental Activism", in *Beyond the Land Ethic,* 43.

[185] Ibid. 32.

[186] Ibid. 33.

[187] "Start where you are and do what you can" from a personal conversation with environmental advocate, Dianne Pachal, Sierra Club of Canada, Prairie Chapter.

[188] Bryan Norton, "Integration and Reduction" in *Environmental Pragmatism,*138.

Muir's use of applied environmental philosophy is implicit in his eventual decision to work within public and political arenas. It was a conscious decision (prompted in no small part with the help of mentors Jeanne Carr and Robert Underwood Johnson) to take his insights, spiritual convictions, and deep experiences of nature into the realm of real world issues. From criticism of the mainstream, to reflection, to the creation of an overarching moral monist philosophy, John Muir worked through a personal philosophical process that eventually resulted in a need to seek real world solutions to the widespread slash-and-burn despoliation of nature he had observed first hand.

As Callicott has argued, the work of applied moral monist philosophy provides a critical function to not only "press the envelope of theory, especially ethical theory" but also provide a touchstone of moral theory in which to choose an ethic or guiding principle when there are conflicting options.[189] In other words, the debate over intrinsic value in nature not only challenges the development of fully articulated ethical theory in environmental philosophy, but the intuitive moral aspects of intrinsic value help to ground a person's basis for action in difficult and complex environmental issues.

For Muir, strategies and principles for action during the fight for Hetch-Hetchy were rooted his personal ontology – the very nature of his reality and being. These included but are not restricted to the moral foundations of beauty and the divine within nature, and a profound recognition of intrinsic value in and of nature. This ontological grounding remained true, despite some who felt Muir sold out the wild fey Celt of the Yosemite years in the latter years of his life – that the anthropocentric focus in Muir's preservationist tactics subverted the vigor of the wilderness mystic.[190] This view, however, neglects the bright core of Muir's personal ontology for it focuses only on Muir's rather astute strategy of political engagement, and not his philosophical foundations.

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[189] J. Baird Callicott, *Beyond the Land Ethic*, 2, 172.

Muir remained consistent with his deep intuitive philosophy while working to support the pragmatic preservation management strategies of the Sierra Club. One can see one aspect of this philosophical consistency within his whole-hearted support and participation in the Sierra Club excursions. Here Muir put a foundational principle of his personal worldview into applied action. Muir's oft expressed wish to get people out into the wild, to see the loveliness of nature, to recognize the divinity suffusing all, was at the root of his support and participation in the Sierra Club outings, and was expressed in much of his published writing.[191] "Wander here a whole summer, if you can. Thousands of God's wild blessings will search you and soak you as if you were a sponge, and the big days will go by uncounted" he would implore his readers, hoping that the bright spirit light of the mountains would bring more people to a new relationship with nature.[192] Although this foundational intent to foster deeper interconnectedness between people and nature in order to cultivate intrinsic value in and of nature was not widely realized by the public in Muir's time, this does not negate Muir's implicit application of this principle as an integral part of his own philosophical worldview. Further, that we can now see the political and philosophical pitfalls of classic preservationism as advocated by the Sierra Club during the Hetch-Hetchy fight should not be an indictment of Muir's philosophical moral integrity. As Cohen succinctly put it, "He simply did the best that he could under the circumstances."[193]

The question of whether John Muir used practical philosophy, as defined by Norton (theoretical principles can be developed out of a specific environmental issue in order to find solutions to that issue) is somewhat more problematic. Assuredly, John Muir reacted to the criticisms leveled against him and the Sierra Club during the Hetch-Hetchy battle with aesthetic-utilitarian, anthropocentric counter-arguments. In a letter to Theodore Roosevelt, Muir also argued for national parks on the merits of beauty, recreation, alternative water supplies, lower costs, and the need to keep national parks "…unspoiled for those who come after us, for they are national properties in which every man has a right and interest."[194] These examples illustrate Muir's classic preservationist tactics, but do they suggest Muir's use of practical philosophy?

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[190] Michael Cohen states that during the Hetch-Hetchy battle years, the Muir who so eloquently argued in the essay *Wild Wool,* that 'the world was not made especially for the uses of man' took on the "robes of the genial prophet", and kept that role to retain friendships and political alliances. See Cohen, *The Pathless Way*, 332.

[191] The opening pages of the chapter of Muir's "The Wild Parks and Forest Reservations of the West" in *Our National Parks* is a classic example of his belief in the benefit of getting people out and into wild nature. See *EWDB*, 459-465.

[192] Ibid. 465.

[193] Michael Cohen, *The Pathless Way,* 278.

I would argue that Muir utilized practical philosophy as a management strategy, not as a philosophical moral foundation for his actions. The plurality of ethical debate surrounding the Hetch-Hetchy dam as well as the political power struggles underlying the creation of National Parks and forest reserves required Muir to carefully consider his strategy for engagement. In the Hetch-Hetchy fight, Muir was not only aware of his opponent's arguments, but also of the divergence of opinion within the Sierra Club. Working with the reality of this situation, Muir pragmatically addressed his critics, but at the same time attempted to remain consistent with his core moral ontology. This was difficult work and Muir often found the ferment of cultural and philosophical pluralism taxing. Writing to his old friend and fellow activist, Robert Underwood Johnson, after winning the earlier Yosemite Valley recession fight, Muir refers to the toll 'unwild' political work exacted from him.

> I am now an experienced lobbyist; my political education is complete. Have attended Legislature, made speeches, explained, exhorted, persuaded every mother's son of the legislators, newspaper reporters, and everybody else who would listen to me. And now that the fight is finished and my education as a politician and lobbyist is finished, I am almost finished myself."[195]

In reading this, it is important to note that Muir did not hesitate to work within the realms of metatheoretical pluralism, as defined by contemporary environmental pragmatists. As defined earlier, metatheoretical pluralism posits that people or groups with theoretically divergent ethical positions may, quite plausibly, work together for a common goal. In review of John Muir's career as wilderness advocate and President of the Sierra Club, it is apparent that he did work towards common preservationist goals with people and groups who did not share the same theoretical or ethical position that he held personally. Nor did many of these people or groups share the same intent of the Sierra Club. For example, the Forestry Commission split into two factions, with Muir and Charles S. Sargent advocating protection of botanical diversity and beauty, and Gifford Pinchot and Arnold Hague pressing for scientifically managed and perpetually utilized forests. Despite these differences, the Commission did agree on the formation of extensive forest reserves and increased diligence by the Government in their long-term care and administration. Further, Muir's association with Edward H. Harriman, President of the Southern Pacific Railroad, was also considered an unusual alliance, but the positive outcome of the Yosemite recession bill was due in no small part to Harriman's political clout in Washington.

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[194] W.F. Badè, ed., "Life and Letters of John Muir," in *John Muir: His Life and Letters and other Writings*, Terry Gifford, ed., (Seattle, The Mountaineers, 1996), 378. Letter from John Muir to Theodore Roosevelt, April 21st, 1908.

[195] W.F. Badè, "The Life and Letters of John Muir" in *John Muir: His Life and Letters and other Writings*, 350. Letter from John Muir to Robert Underwood Johnson, Martinez, February 24th, [1905]

Strange bedfellows indeed, but the result was that John Muir worked on preservationist causes with people and groups that, although theoretically and ethically foreign to him, did advance and support mutually held goals. This, however, is where Muir's use of the tenets of environmental pragmatism ends. If we look closer, we will see how Muir's incorporation of metatheoretical pluralism was not truly central to his personal philosophy – it was a tool used in the necessary remedial work to bring about change within society's understanding of the values of wilderness. That he had grave misgivings on more than one occasion regarding the people he rubbed shoulders with during the campaigns for Yosemite recession and saving Hetch-Hetchy may be seen in his personal correspondence. Writing about Harriman, Muir notes "At first rather repelled…I at last learned to love him" and of Pinchot, "P. is ambitious…and never hesitates to sacrifice anything or anybody in his way."[196] Muir may have worked pragmatically in political forums, but did not compromise his internal integrity of purpose and ethical conviction.

In Nash's discussion about how John Muir and the preservationists tried at first to keep their feet in both the 'aesthetic/recreation/spiritual value in nature' camp, and the 'wise use/planned development' camp, he states, "In theory this was possible. But the pressure of making decisions about specific tracts of undeveloped land forced ambivalence into dogmatism."[197] At first, Muir felt it was possible to work within both camps; however, fundamental differences in the foundational moral intuitions of each stream of conservation made continued compromise on a moral philosophical level untenable. As John Muir moved through the political morass of the 1890's, sharp lessons on the cost of ethical compromise became harder to bear. Muir struggled at a deep philosophical level with the cost of compromise, until the tension became irreconcilable and he had to make a decision. As Canadian philosopher, John Ralston Saul, describes the art of compromise, "It is one of our most important talents...[it] keeps people talking to each other and living together...But there is a very real difference between this talent and the marginalization of ethics in the name of smooth process."[198] After the split with Pinchot, Muir no longer tried to accommodate, 'in the name of smooth process,' the wise use/forest management branch of the conservation movement—to do so would have marginalized his personal integrity and moral ontology.

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[196] Stephen Fox, *The American Conservation Movement,* 127, 130.

[197] Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind,* 129-30.

In this final split from the wise use conservation camp, Muir's return to extolling the intrinsic value of wilderness illustrates his personal retraction from embracing a moral pluralist position. He could not entertain, at the intuitive moral level, his deep non-anthropocentric wilderness values and also espouse the anthropocentricism of progressive conservation's utilitarianism. This is precisely the problem that J. Baird Callicott brings forward with his arguments against moral pluralism. "Here...is the crux of what I think is wrong with moral pluralism. It severs ethical theory from moral philosophy, from the metaphysical foundations in which ethical theory is, whether we are conscious of it or not, grounded."[199] In other words, ethical theory – the principles we hold that underpin our moral actions and behaviors cannot, without a profound loss of personal integrity and consistency, be separate from the deep metaphysical moral intuitions that give birth to those principles.

The philosophical positions between John Muir and the progressive conservationist (utilitarian) camp were too inconsistent, and in the face of this glaring inconsistency, Muir had no recourse but to go back to his foundational moral/intuitive philosophy. As Callicott notes, "Attempting to act upon inconsistent or mutually contradictory ethical principles results in frustration of action altogether or in actions that are either incoherent or mutually canceling."[200] "Consistency" he adds, "is... the very foundation of critical judgement."[201] That Muir made a critical judgement and remained true to his personal moral philosophy is apparent. That the exercise cost him dearly was also apparent, but the decision freed him as well. From that point on, his early utilitarian 'forest management-speak' was muted and his strong public advocacy for the spiritual value of wilderness became his central message. As Michael Cohen attests, John Muir was "...never interested in preserving only scenery."[202]

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[198] John Ralston Saul, *On Equilibrium*, 73.

[199] J. Baird Callicott, "The Case Against Moral Pluralism" in *Beyond the Land Ethic: More Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, 158.

[200] Ibid. 154.

In concluding whether Muir adhered to the theoretical and metatheoretical pluralism as espoused by contemporary environmental pragmatism, it is apparent that he did not adhere to theoretical pluralism, but did utilize the methodology of metatheoretical pluralism as a strategy in the preservationist cause. Without a doubt, John Muir deliberately tempered his public writing to fit cultural norms, couched preservationist arguments in anthropocentric terms, cultivated a wide spectrum of powerful friends and allies, used his formidable grasp of science as a way to argue his position and win, and used his growing celebrity status to gain public support. This does not, however, translate into Muir's picking and choosing any given moral theoretical approach that might best fit any given environmental issue; he remained true to his deep intuitive moral philosophy throughout his life.

Muir and the question of intrinsic value

The question of intrinsic value appears to be a central point of debate and disagreement in environmental moral philosophy. As J. Baird Callicott has succinctly stated, "...the intrinsic-value-in-nature question has been, and remains, the central and most persistent cluster of problems in theoretical environmental philosophy."[203] Defining value and the nature of value is a critical metaphysical task in environmental philosophy, as it has important implications for ethics, policy creation, decision making and evaluation. Within environmental philosophy, a great deal of discussion revolves around three definitions of value: intrinsic value, inherent value and instrumental value.

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[201] J. Baird Callicott, "Environmental Philosophy *Is* Environmental Activism" in *Beyond the Land Ethic*, 34.

[202] Michael Cohen, *The Pathless Way*, 277.

[203] J. Baird Callicott, *Beyond the Land Ethic*, 14.

Intrinsic value is defined as the value an object has that is independent of the presence of a valuer. In other words, value exists in the universe whether there are conscious beings actively valuing it or not. For example, planet 'Z' revolving around star 'X' within an unknown galaxy in the Virgo Super-cluster has value in and of itself, whether a 'valuer' is aware of its existence or not. The individuals who subscribe to this concept of intrinsic value 'in and of nature' are called 'objective' ecocentrists, in that value is objectively, not subjectively conferred.

Inherent value is defined as value that requires a valuer, one who can consciously appreciate an object, quality or experience. Adhering to the concept of inherent value does not mean that the valuer must be present with the object of value, as one may be aware of something existing and appreciate its value regardless of personal experience. An example of inherent value would be appreciation of the biodiversity values teeming in Lancaster Sound in the Canadian Arctic, regardless of whether I have ever stepped foot in the region. People who adhere to the concept of inherent value are called 'subjective' ecocentrists, for all value is subjectively conferred.[204]

Instrumental value is generally viewed to be value of an object or and experience that serves a means to accomplish an end. It is a function of usefulness.[205] Since it is also generally recognized that human beings embody intrinsic value, which is a foundational tenet of anthropocentricism, objects and experiences that serve as means for human beings have instrumental value. Therefore, a stand of timber in northern Alberta and the 'million dollar' bull elk residing along Highway 16 in Jasper National Park may both have instrumental value. Both provide a source of money that supports human economic welfare, and both have the potential to provide positive aesthetic experiences for human beings, therefore both contain a function of usefulness. However, it is also important to note that if an object or experience has instrumental value, it may also have intrinsic or inherent value. The conferring of one type of value does not exclude the conferring of other value(s) to an object or experience.

Before delving into a discussion of how environmental pragmatists and J. Baird Callicott view the question of intrinsic value, a short overview of other so-called 'moral monist' philosophers' positions regarding intrinsic value would be helpful. This will be especially helpful in the discussion of John Muir's foundational moral intuitions and how he put them into practical action.

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[204] Ibid. 15.

[205] Joseph R. Des Jardins, *Environmental Ethics: an Introduction to Environmental Philosophy*, (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993), 144.

The field of ecocentric thought is as wide and diverse as the people who have adopted the concept of intrinsic or inherent value. The idea of intrinsic value within the discipline of environmental ethics started as a point of serious discussion in the 1970's, when philosophers Richard Sylvan, Holmes Rolston III and Arne Naess all advanced the idea of intrinsic value in nature as a critical component of environmental ethics.[206] From that point on, the debate has encompassed a myriad of variations on the theme, and not a few dissenters, who question the very existence and applicability of the idea of instrinsic or inherent value.

J. Baird Callicott considers inherent value as "the essential character of something" that is subjectively conferred, and intrinsic value as "belonging to the essential nature or constitution of a thing" that is objective and independent of all valuing consciousness.[207] Callicott bases his own adherence to inherent value on Humean moral sentimentalism, a belief that "moral value, like aesthetic value, is in the eye of the beholder" and is therefore subjective in nature.[208] Callicott initially advocated objective ecocentricism, but "reluctantly came to the conclusion that intrinsic value cannot exist objectively."[209] Instead, he advocates what he calls a "truncated intrinsic value" that recognizes intrinsic value in nature *for* itself, (as ascribed by a valuer) but not *in* itself, (as ascribed objectively with no conscious valuer). Hence, the concept of inherent value may be used to describe Callicott's truncated intrinsic value.

Holmes Rolston III, on the other hand, has steadfastly advocated the objectivity of intrinsic value, expanding this concept to include the moral implications and duties we have towards species and ecosystems, and even the planet as a whole.[210] To Rolston, "…value is not just a human product" for nature is "an originating source of value first, and only later and secondarily a resource."[211] In valuing nature beyond that of commodity or use, Rolston argues for realizing the value of nature "*of their kind, as good kinds*", then extending value to neighboring organisms, and then even further to the idea of value being alien to human subjective consciousness.[212]

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[206] J. Baird Callicott, "Rolston on Intrinsic Value: A Deconstruction", in *Beyond the Land Ethic*, 222.

[207] J. Baird Callicott, "Intrinsic Value, Quantum Theory and Environmental Ethics," *In Defense of the Land Ethic*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 161-62. Callicott rests his holistic communitarian ethic on a philosophical pedigree which stems from David Hume to Darwin, and from Darwin to Aldo Leopold and Callicott's advocacy of the Land Ethic.

[208] Ibid. 160.

[209] J. Baird Callicott, "Rolston on Intrinsic Value: A Deconstruction" in *Beyond the Land Ethic*, 223.

[210] Holmes Rolston III, *Environmental Ethics: Duties and Values in the Natural World*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988). See also Roderick Nash, *The Rights of Nature: a History of Environmental Ethics*, 154-55.

> Yet the human genius is such that we can nonetheless manage to cross these thresholds (through science, imagination, wilderness adventure, ethical sensitivity) and glimpse these wildest values. Value attaches to experience but also to shared somatic skills. Value attaches even to the cleverness of alien forms. Value is sometimes anthropomorphic, but can be morphic in any formed integrity. *Value is storied achievement.*[213]

For Rolston, value as storied achievement embraces the process of the evolution of ethics. The story of the expansion of ethics is for Rolston the story of 'value as storied achievement' and is "…transformed into movement along a story line…The ethic becomes an epic."[214] While supporting Rolston's commitment to advance the foundational idea of objective intrinsic value in nature, Callicott has criticized him for "…going off the deep end…" in that it is not possible to rationally support such an ethic within a conventional modern view.[215] This criticism, however, does not stem from Callicott's lack of intuitive realization of objective intrinsic value, rather, he is perhaps acting pragmatically, electing to posit a more palatable ethic that may be easier to comprehend, and thus accept, within the postmodern philosophical and social/cultural milieu.[216] At the core of Callicott's position, however, is that he simply cannot accept the concept of 'value' without there being a 'valuer'. Therefore, Callicott's adherence to 'truncated' intrinsic value could be viewed as an attempt at a practical philosophical bridge between the radical implications of

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[211] Holmes Rolston III, "Values Gone Wild," in *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*, Susan G. Armstrong, Richard G. Botzler, eds., (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993), 59.

[212] Ibid. 62.

[213] Ibid.

[214] Holmes Rolston III, *Environmental Ethics: Duties and Values in the Natural World*, 342.

[215] J. Baird Callicott, "Rolston on Intrinsic Value: A Deconstruction" in *Beyond the Land Ethic*, 224.

[216] Ibid. 235. Referring to Rolston's theory of objective intrinsic value in nature, Callicott says of Rolston, "…while I'm in the tent and he's in the pulpit, I myself am a born-again believer."

Rolston's objective intrinsic value and the modern utilitarian mindset. Callicott's efforts in this case could be considered a part of Rolston's *ethics as epic* story-line.[217]

Rolston and Callicott are not alone in their support of the concept of intrinsic value in nature. Seminal philosophers of the Deep Ecology Movement, Arne Naess and George Sessions, include intrinsic value as the first of eight platform principles for the movement.

> The wellbeing and flourishing of human and non-human Life on Earth have value in themselves. (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.[218]

Within Deep Ecology thought, intrinsic value (ecospherical egalatarianism) and Self-realization (realization of the self as part of the larger Self of nature) are two ultimate norms. For Naess, the articulation of intrinsic value comes from an intuitive sense of the interconnectedness of all in nature – a personal insight further supported by ecological science and gestalt psychology.[219] The difficulty facing this formulation stems from Deep Ecology's reliance on the power of intuitive thought, and the lack of distinction between the individual and nature. Both of these premises are generally considered irrational in traditional western philosophy for they challenge Cartesian dualism – the strict separation of objective and subjective, and open the possibility that intuitive or emotional value judgements can, within certain contexts, be as rationally justified as objective science.[220] Later in this chapter, I discuss further the role of intuitive thought in support of intrinsic value with further reference to Naess and Deep Ecology thought, and how Muir used intuition in the formation of his own ecosophy. But first, a brief overview of environmental pragmatism's argument against the concept of intrinsic value, from which we can then draw further comparisons to Muir's life and thought.

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[217] Another example of 'ethics as a story line' would be Callicott's advocacy of a Leopoldian Communitarian Land Ethic. Callicott and other philosophers all contribute to the evolution of environmental ethics, as also does the global environmental movement in its myriad forms and endeavors.

[218] Arne Naess and George Sessions, "Principles of the Deep Ecology Movement", *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology,* Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue, eds., (Berkeley, North Atlantic Books, 1995), 49.

[219] Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, 2, 35-36, 57-58.

[220] Joseph Des Jardins, *Environmental Ethics*, 226.

The concept of intrinsic value in/of nature is problematic for environmental pragmatists. Although some environmental pragmatists may give a nod in the direction of intuitive metaphysics as part of the plurality of human philosophical diversity, there is a modernist bias against it within their own overarching pragmatic theory. As environmental pragmatist Kelly Parker states, the value of metaphysics (which involves intuition and imaginative thought) "…depends upon its making only justifiable assumptions and on following a methodology that allows for correction of its assertions."[221] It therefore must adhere in some way to a rational explanation. The world of intuition and imaginative thought, from which the concept of intrinsic value in nature rises, is therefore "…incapable of entering into knowledge or experience."[222]

Bryan Norton considers the entire question of intrinsic value so fraught with problems and differences of academic opinion that it significantly hinders resolution of real immediate environmental issues. Further, he argues that the entire discussion is probably not necessary, since there appears to be a convergence between theoretically diverse points of view in their general agreement on the 'sustainability principle.'[223] Norton's position, however, does not address a central concern embedded within the intrinsic value debate – the ethical conundrum of how to determine what constitutes *sufficient justification* for interference in nature.

The ethical argument of what constitutes 'sufficient justification' to interfere with nature is central to J. Baird Callicott and Deep Ecology philosopher Warwick Fox's support for intrinsic value. As Callicott and Fox suggest, a solid philosophical case for intrinsic value would make a huge difference in how people approach practical environmental decision making and the creation of environmental policy.[224] In achieving social acceptance of intrinsic value in nature, we would effectively move along a continuum of moral evolution, as Rolston has intimated with his 'ethics as an epic story line' and Roderick Nash has outlined in his discussion of ethical extension and the expanding concept of rights.[225] With this ethical extension, using the right reasons for doing the right thing would hold stronger moral conviction, and provide a touchstone on which to judge pragmatic considerations. As Callicott states, "…there's nothing wrong with giving instrumental reasons, ancillary to the right reasons, for doing the right thing."[226]

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[221] Kelly A. Parker, "Pragmatism and Environmental Thought" in *Environmental Pragmatism*, 24.

[222] Ibid.

[223] Bryan Norton, "Integration and Reduction" in *Environmental Pragmatism*, 122. Norton subscribes to the sustainability principle as the answer to the quest for the most defensible environmental ethic. The principle "…asserts that each generation has an obligation to protect productive ecological and physical processes necessary to support options necessary for future human freedom and welfare." In Norton's view the principle is unapologetically anthropocentric and entirely able to support the environmental policy agenda.

[224] J. Baird Callicott, "Intrinsic Value in Nature" in *Beyond the Land Ethic*, 244-46.

According to Callicott and Fox, a strong philosophical case for intrinsic value in nature would change the dynamics of decision making regarding environmentally destructive projects. The onus for proving 'sufficient justification' for a controversial project would have to be met by the proponent of a project or policy, as it would be their actions that would interfere with the intrinsic value in nature.[227] This would effectively reverse what is currently standard practice, where the burden of proof lays mainly with conservationists to make a convincing case for environmental protection on the grounds of instrumental values only. Conservationists are left with instrumental values such as recreation, aesthetics, clean air and water for humanity as the only socially acceptable arguments to outweigh the instrumental value (usually jobs and the economic welfare of communities and/or corporations) of proceeding with the controversial project. Without the moral touchstone of intrinsic value, environmentally destructive projects may be (and have been) given the green light because decisions are structured only on utilitarian resourcist values. Environmental decision making is therefore subject to environmental impact assessments that focus on instrumental values and are unable and/or unwilling to accommodate the moral implications of the concept of intrinsic value. Environmental advocates are then, as Neil Evernden clearly puts it, forced into "… acceptance of impossible standards as a basis of environmental defence."[228]

It is here, with recognition of these impossible standards as a basis of environmental defence, that the life, work and thought of John Muir comes back into focus and contemporary relevance. The question of intrinsic value is central to this entire discussion – central to the life of John Muir, central to the efforts of J.

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[225] Roderick Nash, *The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics*, 7. Nash argues that there is an historical tradition of extending rights, starting with natural rights of the individual and then extending to the abolishment of slavery, the emancipation of women, Indian rights, labor rights and civil rights. The first glimmer of social acceptance for the rights of nature may be seen in the American Endangered Species Act of 1973, and the Canadian Species at Risk Act, passed in 2001.

[226] J. Baird Callicott, "Intrinsic Value in Nature" in *Beyond the Land Ethic*, 244.

[227] Ibid. 244-45.

[228] Neil Evernden, *The Natural Alien: Humankind and Environment*, 12.

Baird Callicott and other ecocentric philosophers, even central to the environmental pragmatist's criticism of moral monism. The environmental pragmatist's intent to downplay or even eliminate the theoretical implications of intrinsic value in nature may be wishful thinking. While Callicott has conceded that a fully systemized ethical structure of intrinsic value may not be totally necessary, this does not stop the continued relevance of the idea of intrinsic value.[229] The concept of intrinsic value continues to inspire and provoke amateur and professional philosophers, activists, and lay-people. The ongoing debate, in which Thoreau, Muir and Leopold have all played seminal roles, therefore, continues along Rolston's story-line, the *ethic as epic* – which encompasses the evolutionary extension of moral considerability, and from that, the concept of rights.

According to Roderick Nash, the progression and gradual extension of ethics in human culture had to wait for the development of intelligence capable of conceptualizing right and wrong. [230] Nash's continuum of ethical extension starts with the moral considerability of the self, and then extends to family, tribe and region, and then to on to the present when nation, race, humans, and some animals are brought into the ethical matrix. In the future, Nash sees ethical consideration extending to include all animals, plants, all life, and then on to rocks, ecosystems, the planet and finally, the Universe.[231] This extension of ethics, I suggest, requires not just intelligence, but also social/cultural readiness to internalize *and act upon* the moral implications of each stage in ethical evolution. In Muir's time, society was ready to hear and appreciate his tempered aesthetic naturalism, but not the radical nature of the ecocentric moral intuitions he held as a central philosophy. The social adoption of the moral implications of intrinsic value in nature was perhaps Muir's most deeply held hope, but the advancement and defence of that hope was also the most personally harrowing and compromising of endeavors. During the early Yosemite years, Muir mused upon the difficulty of treading the line between his deep moral intuitions and the compromise he knew society would demand. "Well, perhaps I may yet become a proper cultivated plant, cease my wild wanderings, and form a so-called pillar or something in society, but if so, I must, like a revived Methodist, learn to love what I hate and to hate what I most intensely and devoutly love."[232] Muir may have had to work with impossible standards of environmental defence while being a 'pillar or something' in society, but the fear of having his intense love of nature compromised did not occur.

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[229] J. Baird Callicott, "Environmental Philosophy *Is* Environmental Activism" in *Beyond the Land Ethic*, 30. Callicott states, "The specific ethical norms of environmental conduct remain for the most part only implicit – a project postponed to the future or something left for ecologically informed people to work out for themselves."

[230] Roderick Nash, *The Rights of Nature*, 4.

[231] Ibid. 5.

The core of Muir's deep conviction that each part of nature had value and that humankind was but one part of nature lies like bedrock under his life and work. The strength of that conviction resides in part with Muir's religious foundations, for value is conferred to all of nature through the act of Creation. Created nature – the concrete animate and inanimate reality of experience has value in and of itself for having been created by God. In an unfolding experiential and relational process, Muir's intuitive reflections on nature coupled with the foundations of religious learning evolved into a personal view that all in nature, individual living things, landscapes, weather, processes, rocks and mountains – all had intrinsic value.

> The glacier polish of rounded brows brighter than any mirror, like windows of a house shining with light from the throne of God – to the very top a pure vision in terrestrial beauty....It is as if the lake, mountain, trees had souls, formed one soul, which had died and gone before the throne of God, the great First Soul, and by direct creative act of God had all earthly purity deepened, refined, gestures made wholly Godful![233]

For Muir, all of nature had deep 'earthly purity', or intrinsic value, through the 'direct creative act of God'. The 'gestures' of nature, the unfolding creative process of nature was wholly Godful, and wholly suffused with divine intrinsic value. The created and the creative were wholly divine and therefore had value in and of themselves. Intrinsic value is conferred, simply and irrevocably, through divine fiat.[234]

Although Muir conferred intrinsic value to nature through recognition of creative and created divinity in nature, it is also important to note that his personal wilderness experiences contributed to and strengthened this core value. Through long and intimate contact with nature, Muir grew to internalize the lessons of unity and diversity, of harmony throughout all nature that also spoke of value in and of nature.

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[232] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, ed., *John of the Mountains: the Unpublished Journals of John Muir*, 90. Excerpt from "Sierra Fragments."

[233] Ibid. 82.

[234] J. Baird Callicott has posited that the ongoing question of how to confer intrinsic value in and of nature through secular philosophical means is in some ways trumped by the Judeo-Christian stewardship environmental ethic. In the stewardship ethic, Callicott states that by declaring creation "good" in Genesis, God conferred intrinsic value on the world, and thus, "God represents an objective axiological point of reference independent of human consciousness." See J. Baird Callicott, "Genesis and John Muir" in *Beyond the Land Ethic*, 192.

> Wonderful how completely everything in wild nature fits into us, as if truly part and parent with us. The sun shines not on us, but in us. The rivers flow not past, but through us, thrilling, tingling, vibrating every fiber and cell of the substance of our bodies, making them glide and sing. The trees wave and the flowers bloom in our bodies as well as our souls, and every bird song, wind song and tremendous storm song of the rocks in the heart of the mountains is our song, our very own, and sings our love.[235]

Without getting any deeper into a discussion of the multi-relational quality of intrinsic value in Muir's life, as this will be covered in greater detail later in this chapter; it is perhaps sufficient to note that it gained a central position in Muir's ontology through a personal unfolding process. Inspired and informed by multiple relations, including early religious learning, deep experiential immersion in nature and intellectual maturation, Muir's adherence to the concept of intrinsic value was foundational to his worldview.

As outlined earlier in this chapter, many Muir scholars have presented different interpretations of Muir's central environmental philosophy. Most of them advance their own interpretation of Muir's expression of intrinsic value in nature.[236] In spite of tremendous social and political pressure to concede to a more pragmatic and socially acceptable worldview, I argue that Muir did not embrace moral pluralism, as defined in environmental pragmatism. Muir worked, strategized and thought through his actions using the touchstone of his personal moral ontology, an ontology that embraced intrinsic value in nature as divine. He utilized pragmatic strategy within the political activism of the preservationist cause. The Sierra Club's mandate and John Muir's activist and leadership role within the Club were manifestations of this pragmatic strategy. But a strategy, on the level of ethical principles for action, springs from a metaphysical, visionary, intuitive, speculative realm of thought, experience and spirituality – a unique moral ontology that was Muir's own.

Muir defended this core metaphysical essence his entire life. As a youth he challenged the narrow orthodoxy of his father's Calvinism, and during his years in living with the Trout family in Upper Canada, gained a reputation for argument over matters of religious doctrine, especially doctrine that he felt "as held by hard-shells…whose imperious, bolt-upright exclusiveness upon any subject is hateful."[237] He felt that the exclusiveness and dogmatic single-mindedness of Calvinists made them blind to divinity in nature. During the early Yosemite years, Muir resisted the efforts of his friend, Jeanne Carr, to bring him out of his beloved mountains to a 'civilized' existence.

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[235] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, ed., *John of the Mountains,* 92.

[236] Among the many scholars who provide various interpretations of Muir's adherence to intrinsic value in nature are Max Oelshlaeger, Michael Cohen, J. Baird Callicott, Roderick Nash, Donald Worster and Holmes Rolston III.

> Well may I fast, not from bread, but from business, book-making, duty-going, and other trifles, and great is my reward already for the manly, treely sacrifice. What giant truths since coming to Gigantea, what magnificent clusters of Sequoiac *becauses*. From here I cannot recite you one, for you are down a thousand fathoms deep in dark political quagg, not a burr-length less.[238]

Muir's conviction never waned. Up until his death from complications of pneumonia on December 24th, 1914, and long after his adventures in pragmatic strategy and instrumental preservationist values, he still had the same old fire in him, to preach the gospel of the wild, to get people out and in it. For Muir, there was no better way to fully internalize the "…terrestrial manifestations of God."[239] As Marion Randall Parsons recounts, John Muir's last months working on the 'Alaska book' (*Travels in Alaska*) were full of intense interest and pleasure. "To get these glorious works of God into yourself – that's the great thing; not to write about them" he told her, but nonetheless enjoyed the immersion in glacial memories that book-making entailed.[240] This does not sound like a man who sold out his own moral ontology for the pragmatic considerations of political activism. There is no theoretical moral pluralism at work here – Muir was not an environmental pragmatist of the Norton genre. His central moral convictions adhere better to the contemporary definition of ecocentricism than to the instrumental strategies embedded in classic preservationism.

For Naess, intrinsic value in nature is predicated upon his personal formulation of "the universal right to live and blossom", which he acknowledges as having no "…clearly formulatable meaning, but that it is the best expression I have so far found of an intuition which I am unable to reject in all seriousness."[241]

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[237] *John Muir Papers*. Letter from John Muir to David Gilrye Muir, April 10th, 1870.

[238] W. F. Badè , "Life and Letters of John Muir" in *John Muir: His Life and Letters and other Writings*, 138. Letter from John Muir to Jeanne Carr, Squirrelville, Sequoia Co., Nut time.

[239] Marion Randall Parsons, "John Muir and the Alaska Book", Sierra Club Bulletin, Vol. X, No. 1, January 1916, reprinted in *John Muir: His Life and Letters and other Writings*, Terry Gifford, ed., (Seattle: The Mountaineers, 1996), 884.

[240] Ibid. 884-86.

[241] Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, 167.

Naess's formulation of intrinsic value is very much an intuitive process at its conception. As I discuss later in this chapter, Muir created his own personal philosophy of intrinsic value from a deep intuitive response to wild nature, so a preliminary overview of the role of intuition and emotion in this process is, at this point, timely.

Intuitions, feelings, emotions, within the affective realm of human lives, have as much power in the discussion of intrinsic value as the cognitive functions. At times, the nebulous ambiguity of describing intuition or emotions in support of the concept of intrinsic value has led to philosophical criticism. For his part, Naess responds to this criticism by saying that people seem to respond better to his use of ambiguous, purposefully vague, embracing slogans. This positive response, he feels, may be because it allows the individual more latitude to suffuse the idea into their own personal worldview - it isn't dictatorial and absolutist.[242] Ambiguity in this sense may be a good thing. Explaining this ambiguity, Naess touches directly on the difficulty of expressing deep metaphysical intuitions.

> ...some of the ambiguity in my writings on deep ecology is due in part to the real difficulty of articulating basic intuitions about the universe. People are frustrated that I can base an entire book on intuitions that are nowhere defined or explained. It is tantalizing for our culture, this seeming lack of explanation. But if you hear a phrase like, " All life is fundamentally one," you should be open to *tasting* this, before asking immediately, "What does this mean?" There is a kind of deep *yes* to nature that is central to my philosophy. What do you say yes to? Very difficult to find out – there is a deep unconditionality, but at the same time a kind of regret, sorrow, or displeasure. Nature is not brutal, but we do see brutality. As we see yellow in the sun. As we see these fantastic gray clouds outside this window..." [243]

The difficulty that Naess faces, as Muir did as well, is that the power of intuition and emotion is more often than not viewed as pernicious mysticism in the modern worldview. The Cartesian separation between fact and value, cognitive and affective, between what is and what ought to be done, rejects the affective domain of human experience as credible support for the idea of intrinsic value.

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[242] David Rothenberg, *Is it Painful to Think: Conversations with Arne Naess*, (Minneapolis: Univeristy of Minnesota Press, 1993), 151.

[243] Ibid.

Ecosophy M: Mysticism and Practicality

The mountain is a symbol of the wide and deep perspective.[244]

Christianity and Mountainanity are streams from the same fountain…[245]

Intuition is a powerful human quality. It may be viewed as an immediate apprehension of a reality through non-rational means. It brings the uncertainty and swirling milieu of both context and imagination into a decision to make a choice, or to act, or to transmit perceptions that are not readily transmittable by any other means.[246] Intuition extends our consciousness in a leap, without thought and argument. However, within the modern worldview, with its emphasis on rationality, on fact, on reductionist science, intuition has been denigrated as nonsensical mysticism. This, Canadian philosopher John Ralston Saul believes, is a problem because through denigration or denial of this essential human quality "…we limit ourselves to less intelligent action than would otherwise be possible."[247]

As seminal philosopher of the contemporary Deep Ecology Movement, Arne Naess also underscores the foundational importance of intuition in forming a worldview, or total view as he refers to it. Intuitions *are* the beginning for Naess' personal total view, a view he describes as "…about who you are, your deepest wishes, your obligations, and your relations with others."[248] It is important to note that Naess is less interested in providing a concrete philosophical structure with accompanying logical arguments than he is advocating intuitive identification with nature as the basis for a new *ontology*, a new way of being "…which posits humanity as inseparable from nature."[249] This focus on ontology differs from the previous discussion on environmental pragmatism, for it addresses the metaphysical roots of what creates the human impetus towards ethical principles and practical action rather than questions of a fully developed ethical structure. It is these roots, these nebulous relational intuitions that are the genesis of Muir's personal ontology, his total view or way of being. In these leaps of intuitive knowing, Muir created his own cosmological vision of creation.

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[244] Ibid. 60.

[245] W.F. Badè, "The Life and Letters of John Muir" in *John Muir: His Life and Letters and other Writings*, 187. Letter from John Muir to J. B. McChesney, Yosemite Valley, January 10th, 1873.

[246] John Ralston Saul, *On Equilibrium*, 166.

[247] Ibid. 183.

[248] David Rothenberg, *Is it Painful to Think: Conversations with Arne Naess*, 135.

[249] David Rothenberg, "Introduction: Ecosophy T: from intuition to system" in Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, 2.

> As we lie, our face to the heavens, the stars how they shine! As we gaze, they call us into the far regions of thought, singing the song of Creation's dawn. From the bottom of the canyon where I lie alone, I hear that song the best, as the constellations swing into view over the rim of the rocks, the same stars the shepherds looked at on the plains, thousands of years ago…Mills of God, every one of them grinding out gusts of light, sending a blessing to each living creature in the sea, on the land, in every nook and corner, the height and depth of the round globe itself. On this shining spark in the firmament every crystal is throbbing, sleeping, yet waking – the quartz, mica, feldspar, tourmaline, hornblende, garnet. What a picture of celestial industry is beheld in the heavens! What a storm of harmonious motion, enduring forever, abating never! Worlds in motion are pulsed through space like the beating of our own hearts, like the myriad globules in the blood of plants and animals…Everything in the wildness is revolving through life like the stars in their places, always within measured bounds though seemingly boundless.[250]

By exploring the essence of John Muir's personal ontology and the formation of his total view, something may also be said about the nature of the perennial relevance he continues to have for so many people. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, there has been renewed interest in the life, work and thought of John Muir during the last two decades, resulting in works that provide various interpretations of Muir's life. Although there is much that remains constant within the various interpretations, there is also a propensity to box and label - Muir is a panthiest, a primitive mystical Christian, an unconscious practitioner of Zen Buddhism, or a proto-ecological harbinger of the Deep Ecology movement. In spite of, or more appropriately, because of this often confusing array of interpretation, what really matters is that Muir continues to have a contemporary relevance that transcends his roles as preservationist figurehead and proto-environmental activist. There is a quality or integrity about his life and work that continues to resonate with people, and while underscoring his status as an environmental icon, is not restricted by it. It is this quality that is uniquely Muir's own that leads to a more relational interpretation of his life and thought, a discussion of what Arne Naess describes as a personal 'ecosophy.'

The development of an ecosophy is a personal endeavor. The word 'ecosophy' brings together the root words *oikos,* meaning 'household', and *sophia,* meaning 'wisdom'. A 'household' in the sense used here refers to more than simply a house or home, it has a broader meaning that embraces the idea of our larger home, the Earth. An ecosophy, then, is the wisdom of our personal relationship with Nature, or the Earth. Naess describes an ecosophy as "…a philosophical world-view or system inspired by the conditions of life in the ecosphere", whereupon we are guided in decisions about ourselves and nature.[251] An ecosophy is informed by aspects of ecology: unity, diversity, interrelationships, interdependency, symbiosis, a *milieu* or a total interconnected organic and inorganic environment. In this, Naess views an ecosophy as "…ecology blended with philosophy, wisdom related to action about people on earth."[252]

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[250] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, ed., *John of the Mountains,* 171.

Further, an ecosophy is a position, or a point of view, and while uniquely personal, may have overlapping elements with other total views, including other philosophies, religions, or metaphysical intuitions. Sometimes, an individual's personal ecosophy may resonate with the total view of another person, and elements of the one may be shared with elements of the other. This is what Arne Naess is endeavoring to do with his efforts to articulate his own ecosophy, "Ecosophy T".[253] Elements of intuition and principle within Ecosophy 'T' resonate with many people who are concerned with the ecological welfare of the planet, and are seeking ways in which to articulate their concern and act in ways that are true to their own total views.

Working with these key metaphysical and intuitive elements, Arne Naess and American philosopher George Sessions articulated eight platform principles as basic concepts for the contemporary Deep Ecology Movement. Tellingly enough, the opening sentence of their presentation of these principles states, "In April 1984, during the advent of spring and John Muir's birthday…" reveals a 'source' inspiration that underscores Muir's relevance to contemporary environmentalism.[254] While Muir would probably have agreed with the intent or these principles, or at least the ones that were applicable to his time, these principles, being ethical constructs, are not central to my discussion of the intuitive metaphysical roots of Muir's ecosophy. What is important about the platform principles is that the source – the very roots of intuitive and metaphysical ideas nurture the personal ecosophies of many people and quite possibly, given time and opportunity, the ethical framework of a society. This underscores and deepens the perennial relevance that John Muir's life and thought continues to wield in philosophical and environmental discourse.

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[251] Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, 38.

[252] David Rothenberg, *Is it Painful to Think*, 134.

[253] Naess uses the symbol "T" for his personal ecosophy in reference to his hut "Tvergastien", perched high on the shoulder of the mountain, Hallingskarvet, which borders the northern end of the Hardangervidda plateau in Norway.

[254] Arne Naess and George Sessions, "Platform Principles of the Deep Ecology Movement" in *The Deep Ecology Movement: an Anthology*, 49.

Naess' thoughts on the importance of root metaphysical beginnings of a personal ecosophy may be used to discuss the intuitive ontology of John Muir, and suggest subsequent ethical principles and practical action. With this in mind, I posit that John Muir's personal ecosophy be called Ecosophy "M", where "M" does not stand for 'Muir', but rather for 'Mountains' – the physical and spiritual keystone of Muir's intuitive wilderness mysticism. Mountains are a key presence in much of Muir's writing, inspired and informed during his Yosemite years, and later during his exploration of northern glaciers. For John Muir, mountains symbolize and embody the essence of unity, of our complete symbiotic relationship with all in nature, and of a way of being in the world that reclaims our sense of being part of the grand process, inseparable from nature.

> Now we are in the mountains, and they are into us. We are fairly living now. What bright seething white-hot fire enthusiasm is bred in us – without our help or knowledge. A perfect influx into every pore and cell of us, fusing, vaporizing by its heat until the boundary wall of our heavy flesh tabernacle seem taken down and we flow and diffuse into the very air and trees and streams and rocks, thrilling with them to the touch of the vital sunbeams. Responsive, we are part of nature now, neither old or young, but immortal in a terrestrial way, neither sick or well. I cannot now conceive of any bodily condition variable and dependent on food or breath any more than the granite stones or the sky. So dependent. How glorious a conversion, so complete and wholesome is it, scarce memory of old bondage days is left as a standpoint to view from, even in the silence and darkness of camp at night. We rather seem to have been so always. Nature like a fluid seems to drench and steep us throughout, as the whole sky and the rocks and flowers are drenched with spiritual life – with God.[255]

Although a complete systemization of Ecosophy "M" is not possible in this study, for only Muir could attempt such an endeavor, it is possible to discuss how Muir's metaphysical intuitions adhere to Naess' foundations for the development and articulation of an ecosophy. Muir's life, work and thought have many overlapping elements that resound strongly with the contemporary Deep Ecology movement.[256] Obviously, Muir can not be viewed as a follower of Deep Ecology, as his reality in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is markedly different from today, and Naess was but a toddler when Muir died in 1914. However, Muir manifested many of the core elements that anticipate both Naess' Ecosophy 'T' and the contemporary Deep Ecology movement as a whole. With this in mind, a discussion of the key elements that are common to Muir's life and thought, and Naess' outline for the articulation of an ecosophy is helpful.

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[255] John Muir, (Muir Papers, File 19.1, Sierra Journal, Summer of 1869, 1:28-29, 103) in *John Muir: To Yosemite and Beyond*, Robert Engberg and Donald Wesling, eds., (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), 51-2.

[256] Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered*, 104-5.

The first element common to both Muir and Naess's articulation of an ecosophy centres on the concept of ecology. German scientist Ernest Haeckel coined the term 'ecology' in 1866, the year John Muir left Trout Hollow in Upper Canada for the din and bustle of industrial Indianapolis. Muir may have been aware of the use of the word later in his life, but he never used it in his writing. This, however, does not preclude Muir's understanding of the elements of ecological science. He knew, through direct scientific observation and sensuous contact with the wild that all nature functioned as one grand whole. Unity and diversity in nature, key elements of ecology, suffused Muir's journals and published works. What may perhaps be even more potent is that there was not only suffusion but *fusion* – a melding of an individual self into the greater unity. As noted above in the Sierra Journal excerpt, nature is fluid to Muir, drenching people, rocks and flowers alike, suffusing all with divine unity. Ecology is about the myriad of inter-connected relationships between diverse elements of a greater whole. "There is not a fragment in all nature, for every relative fragment of one thing is a full harmonious unit in itself" Muir noted during his sojourn in Cuba in 1867. Later, in the Sierra Nevadas, Muir writes of ecological units within units, relations extending from a cellular level to that of ecosystems.[257]

> Vegetable cells of every form and color are units of perfect beauty, and so are their combinations in flowers – units also of beauty composed of many units. And flowers builded into structures of racemes and clusters and starry heads are also units of beauty; and so are the patches and tangles of each, and the grand sheets of all combined spread in purple and gold over smooth hills and plains; and these plain sheets united with the shaggy, spiry woods of the mountains and the dun blanks of summits and deserts are still units… [258]

What we now view as ecological diversity, Muir sees as units of beauty, manifestations of the divine order inextricably linked together. For Muir, the essence of the divine in nature *is* ecological. In this, we see a second element of Muir's intuitive thought that dovetails with Naess's articulation of an ecosophy –

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[257] John Muir, "Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf" in *EWDB,* 168.

[258] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, ed., *John of the Mountains*, 63.

the ultimate importance of ecology as a model for ecosophy, of the power of interrelationship, and interdependence as a foundation for environmental thought.

Muir observes elements of interrelationships, of symbiotic relationships, complexity overlaying complexity but all unified in nature as a whole. "The best gains of this trip were the lessons of unity and interrelation of all the features of the landscape revealed in general views."[259] It is not only the interrelationships that Muir observes between organisms, landscape and process in nature that informs his concepts of diversity and unity, but also his own place in relations with all that is. The 'relational field' as Naess describes, "…refers to the totality of our interrelated experience, but in general not to time and space."[260] It is a field in which we are embedded, and the relations between all, including humanity, make it impossible to view anything within that field as existing apart, isolated within nature. Thinking relationally therefore, requires articulation about all aspects of the total field to be relational – it is the way that it is because of its relations within the overarching, all inclusive context of nature. It also means that humanity separate from all of nature is untenable, and that we are who we are because of our embeddedness in the relational field of nature. Muir intuitively recognizes this in his personal musings on the 'terrestrial' nature of man, intimating that the more 'terrestrial' one becomes the more one is personally enriched through deep immersion in nature.

> The more extensively terrestrial a being becomes, the higher it ranks among its fellows, and the most terrestrial being is the one that contains all the others, that has, indeed, flowed through all the others and borne away parts of them building them into itself...[261]

For Muir, being 'terrestrial' means being inextricably embedded in nature – indeed, the entire cosmos. It is also important to note that Muir is not simply talking about the physical nature of being terrestrial, but specifically about the metaphysical and spiritual enrichment of embracing the flow between the myriad relations in nature – a process that creates a being higher, or advanced in 'Self' actualization than others not so 'terrestrial'. Further, Muir sees humanity as having a capability of realizing this flow, and thus being capable of divine enrichment.

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[259] John Muir, "My First Summer in the Sierra", in *EWDB*, 278.

[260] Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, 55.

[261] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, ed., *John of the Mountains*, 138. "Sunnyside Observations, with Notes Written on Floor of Yosemite Valley," March 15th, 1873.

> …Such a being is man, who has flowed down through other forms of being and absorbed and assimilated portions of them into himself, thus becoming a microcosm most richly Divine because most richly terrestrial.[262]

John Muir's description of relations between all elements of nature, culminated in being 'terrestrial,' anticipates a third element of Naess's articulation of an ecosophy – the interrelationship and interdependency of all parts and wholes within nature. Muir's intuition that each part of nature is relationally enriched by all other parts of the whole, and while also being a whole unto itself, which in this case is human, (though it could also be nature, or a watershed, or a tree) is made more divine by the infusion of richness through the interdependency of all parts and wholes. Muir's rather unique expression of parts and wholes in a cosmological sense leads naturally to Arne Naess' conceptual use of gestalts and gestalt thinking. While Arne Naess uses the slogan, "All things hang together" to illustrate gestalt relations, John Muir earlier mused, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."[263] Taking the idea of gestalts from the psychology of perception, Naess conceives gestalts as a philosophical concept. A gestalt is thus perceived as an organized whole that is more than a sum of its parts, in which the parts and the whole are not simply a collection of things, nor simply a collection of qualities. Here, Naess expands the concept of gestalts to include an "…infusion of the character of the whole into each single part" or rather, to include not only material but also qualitative perceptions into the meaning of parts within the whole.[264]

It isn't difficult to find instances of Muir's grasp of the beauty of parts within wholes or wholes as profoundly beautiful in character through the myriad of relational parts; his journals and notebooks are liberally sprinkled with them. One rather profound example can be found in Muir's letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson, following Emerson's visit and meeting of Muir in Yosemite in the summer of 1871. In this letter, Muir writes of the magnificent Sequoia in the Mariposa Grove that Emerson had named "Samoset."

> Here is Samoset with whom you are acquainted & with whom I spent a night & day. He is noble in form & behavior as any Sequoia friend that I have – less proper – less orthodox than his two

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[262] Ibid.

[263] Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, 57. See also John Muir, "My First Summer in the Sierra" in *EWDB,* 248.

[264] Ibid. 58.

> companions but has more dignity – more freedom, wh'[ich] he manifests by the curving and thrusting of every limb.
>
> All three touch & intermingle at the top -- at least when breathed upon by the winds.
>
> Some spirey, arrowy firs are poised about his brown trunk which makes a magnificent background for their level benches of silvery spray. Among his other friends living far below in his shadow are the Ceonothus & the rose & the lupine & violet & broad shouldered bracken.
>
> And little mosses and lichens also, humblest children of the Kingdom, meet King Sequoia & dwell with him & they paint his grand column with their green & gold as big congregations of social flowers color the flutings of the hillside.
>
> ...From first to last all of Nature seemed to hear the call of another King David & joined in one grand rejoicing. There was the sweetest wavings & hushings of trees hummings of insect wings – open jointed warblings of birds & rocks too pulsed to the general joy, & every crystal and individual dust – [265]

This long and rambling letter does not end here, but continues into ever widening circles of relational gestalts, expanding to include Muir's discovery of an ancient glacier channel in the high Sierra. One can sense then, how Muir united the whole through more than simply the sum of its parts. He perceives, he thinks and he feels emotion through the cascade of interrelated parts; himself, the wind, the trees, flowers, birds, lichens, insect wings, crystal and dust – all as parts, but together breathing an ineffable quality of beauty and unity. This is the essence of relational gestalt thinking, which is also the essence of Muir's ecological mysticism and personal ontology. Perception within gestalt thinking, including both cognitive and affective realms, is also foundational to Naess' concept of gestalt ontology.[266]

The milieu, or total relational field within Muir's life is not bounded by his beloved Sierras. In this, we see a fourth element of Naess's conceptualization of an ecosophy.[267] Starting at birth, the complex overlays and fusing of experience, thought and emotion all contribute to a unique ontology. Muir's years as young child, schoolboy and youth are naturally embedded into a relational field that includes family, friends, farm, community and nature.[268] Other elements are also important within the milieu. Religion and/or spirituality, and education are also part of a total view, as are social relations, culture and history. In Muir's life, all of these elements had a part to play in the contextual milieu of his ontological foundations.

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[265] Robert Engberg and Donald Wesling, eds., *John Muir: To Yosemite and Beyond*, 66-69. Letter from John Muir to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Yosemite, July 6th, [1871].

[266] Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, 60-63.

[267] Ibid, 7. Naess uses environment and milieu interchangeably in his work. The word environment is useful, but sometimes limiting, while milieu, while not as commonly used, encompasses value and meaning richness of all nature. The milieu includes the total relational field of all within it, including individuals, their experiences, thoughts, relationships and actions.

[268] Steven Holmes, *The Young John Muir: An Environmental Biography.*. Holmes' insightful psychobiographical account of Muir's life from birth to the early Yosemite years gives a thorough account of the relations between these key elements of Muir's life, with emphasis on familial and mentor relations in his early years.

The relational field of childhood into adolescence is especially potent, and in Muir's case the gestalt of family, community, school, religion and nature contributed a unique orientation. Growing up in Dunbar, Scotland, Muir's relational field included not only his immediate family, including maternal grandparents, but also a gradually expanding experience of the geography of his home place. From the safe confines of the family's garden and walks with his Grandfather into the fields surrounding Dunbar, young John moved to expand the geographical range of childhood adventures and exploration into the fields, hills and rocky shores around Dunbar.

> With red-blooded playmates, wild as myself, I loved to wander in the fields to hear the birds sing, and along the seashore to gaze and wonder at the shells and seaweeds, eels and crabs in the pools among the rocks when the tide was low; and best of all to watch the waves in awful storms thundering on the black headlands and craggy ruins of the old Dunbar Castle when the sea and the sky, the waves and the clouds, were mingled together as one.[269]

Pleasure, pain, fascination, fear, joy and wonder contributed to the imaginative and intuitive responses to nature at a young age. Pleasure and pain were inseparable within the context of Muir's 'wild-child' years; exuberant and joyful wildness "...was ever sounding in our ears", but was inevitably balanced by the 'thrashings' Muir regularly received from a father intent on religious humility and proper moral conduct.[270] Muir's relational field grew gradually wider, including school and lessons drilled home by the 'skin' method (whippings to encourage attention to study and punishment for mistakes), the social and cultural context of 19th century Scotland, and the religious fervor of his father's Disciples of Christ beliefs.

Within the context of Muir's life, as a young child to mature adult, religion was a key element that informed and suffused his evolving total view. The genesis of Ecosophy "M" lies in part within the Protestant Christian beliefs that were such an integral part of Muir's young life. Within Muir's childhood home, his father wielded the power of religious patriarch with stern expectations for his children's religious education. In the autobiographical account of his childhood, Muir remarked "...father made me learn so many Bible verses every day that by the time I was eleven years of age I had about three fourths of the Old Testament and all of the New by heart and by sore flesh."[271]

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[269] John Muir, "The Story of my Boyhood and Youth", in *EWDB*, 27.

[270] Ibid. 41. See also Steven Holmes, *The Young John Muir: An Environmental Biography*, 4.

Regardless of the negative aspects of enforced learning, elements of Christian theology, language and imagery remained a part of Muir's relational field and relational thinking from childhood to maturity. That John Muir gradually, through self questioning and maturation began to criticize his father's rigid denominational doctrines does not nullify the importance of Christian values in his evolving total view. As Ronald Limbaugh and others have asserted, Muir did not completely reject Christianity, especially the roots of primitive Christianity, rather, he "shed his denominational garments and became a Christian independent."[272] Muir's problem was finding consistency between what he experienced in nature and grew to see in the myriad relational lessons of the wild with his Christian foundations. It was this working out, this search for consistency that marks him as a philosopher – he simply was doing what all philosophers do, pulling together a collage of his own worldview, pulling together his own construction, or ecosophy.[273]

The relational field of Muir's young life expanded geographically, culturally and personally when the family immigrated to Wisconsin in 1849. The prospect of the "…wonderful schooless [sic] bookless American wilderness…" carried him with enthusiasm to the frontier farmstead near Fountain Lake in Wisconsin, where his first experiences in the wild forests and lake lands were immersions in pure joy. "This sudden plash into pure wildness – baptism in Nature's warm hearth – how utterly happy it made us!"[274] For Muir, the visceral immediacy of experience in nature is foundational to the education of children. Later in life, he recounted these days and the potency that wildness had in his young life.

> There is an essential unity between pure wilderness and human nature when that nature is uninterrupted by the cares and teachings and lessons of religion that come later. But we fell right into the arms of the wilderness like that. Just turn a boy loose in a wilderness like that, and his education begins right off. That was another school for us altogether, and the lessons were pursued in an entirely different spirit.

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[271] John Muir, "Story of My Boyhood and Youth" in *EWDB*, 36.

[272] Ronald H. Limbaugh, "The Nature of John Muir's Religion", *John Muir: Life and Legacy* ,The Pacific Historian, Volume 29, Numbers 2 & 3, (Stockton: University of the Pacific for the Holt-Atherton Center for Western Studies, 1985), 16-27. See also Dennis Williams, "John Muir, Christian Mysticism, and the Spiritual Value of Nature" in *John Muir: Life and Work*, Sally Miller ed., (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 83-99.

[273] Personal discussion with Professor Margaret Van de Pitte, Department of Philosophy, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

[274] Ibid. 45.

> All our other lessons were taken because we had to take them, or have this skin system applied to us. But in the true wilderness we needed no lesson: we needed no urging. The lessons confronted us, and like those people in Corinth (spoken of in the Bible) Paul said that when he preached the gospel there, they received it gladly. Well, we received all these lessons gladly. And we never had received on confounded lesson gladly before. Oh! That was a glorious wilderness: everything new! And that bond of union between humanity and all the rest of the wilderness that is pure. Everything else sinks out of sight. All you have to do is to present the wilderness to human nature, in the shape of a boy, care free, and bring him in touch, and Nature does the rest. It is like simply pressing a button![275]

Although this recollection occurred late in his life, it clearly articulates Muir's foundational belief that human beings have the capacity for a 'bond of union' with the wild through the opportunity of immersion in it. The union is 'pure', and all else 'sinks out of sight.' Nature's lessons and the bond that results may be realized through simple unmitigated immersion. This immersion, as a core intuitive value, is a foundational part of Muir's Ecosophy "M" and a core element of Muir's ontological wholeness. This idea of pure dipping in the wild, of regular and sustained immersion in wild nature also became a practical tactic Muir employed with the Sierra Club and through much of his writing. Observing once that "most people are on the world, not in it – have no conscious sympathy or relationship to anything about them – undiffused, separate, and rigidly alone like marbles of polished stone, touching but separate" Muir later bent a great deal of his creative energy into getting people out 'into' it.[276]

Muir's youth in Wisconsin was by no means a long-term ecstatic immersion in pure wilderness. As he grew into adolescence, his father began to divest the most onerous farm work onto his oldest son. Muir's teenage years were spent in hard drudging farm labor that often came near to ruining his health, and an emerging sense of self that resulted in many arguments with his father. Much of the ferment of these years has already been covered in Muir biographies and needs no repetition; nonetheless, it is important to note that the relational field of Muir's existence was changing, along with the relational aspects of key religious, familial and cultural elements. Forbidden by his father to read anything but religious texts, Muir secretly read an eclectic range of books, from grammar, mathematics and science to literary classics including

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[275] *John Muir Papers,* Series III C, file 08429, 73-4. See the "Pelican Bay Manuscript", first draft, circa 1908, Holt Atherton Archives, University of the Pacific, Stockton, California. The Pelican Bay Manuscript is an interesting record of Muir's direct speaking style. The manuscript was completed with the help of a stenographer provided by his friend, Edward Harriman. Muir spent hours recounting autobiographical material, which he eventually was able to revise and publish as *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth.*

[276] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 320.

Milton, the romantic poets and Shakespeare. It was Muir's introduction to the Romantics and their articulation of a more personal way of relating to nature that first gave some formal expression to his own intuitive knowing of the wild. A personal resonance with the Romantics certainly informed Muir's adult years; a resonance with what Worster describes as "...an ecological perspective: that is, a search for holistic or integrated perception, an emphasis on interdependence and relatedness in nature, and an intense desire to restore man to a place of intimate intercourse with the vast organism that constitutes the earth."[277]

In addition to the romantics, the accounts of explorers, specifically Alexander Von Humboldt and Mungo Park became particularly fascinating to the young John Muir, planting both the idea and a deep yearning to explore exotic places. Further, he excelled at mechanical invention, with creativity born of lively intelligence and an adolescent need to prove himself. Building a self-setting sawmill, he dammed a stream on the farm for water power and put the mill into operation. This feat was followed by a succession of inventions: barometers, pyrometers, thermometers, water wheels, door-locks and latches, lamp lighters, fire lighters and an automatic horse feeder.[278] While Muir's inventive ability won the admiration of his mother, siblings and neighborhood friends, it prompted only grudging acknowledgment from his father.

How all of these elements, intellectual, spiritual, and physical come together relationally for an individual is a complex and diverse process. During Muir's youth a myriad of influences provided both the cognitive and the affective elements that comprise the gestalt relations within an emerging ecosophy. There is no real separation between the cognitive and the affective in a gestalt relation, as Naess states, "...gestalt formation crosses boundaries between what is conventionally classed as thinking as separated from emotion."[279] With Muir, the relational field of his youth included both the affective and cognitive; practical hard work fused with empathy with farm animals, study and mechanical inventions overlaid with the 'marvels' and 'love songs' of snipes and frogs, patriarchal enforcement of Calvinist dogma and the intuitive and empathic response to the fear of death in the eyes of a mother pig and her babies, a fear Muir noted that "...corroborates in no uncertain terms the oneness of all of us."[280]

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[277] Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy*, 82.

[278] John Muir, "The Story of My Boyhood and Youth" in *EWDB*, 100-101.

[279] Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle,* 63.

[280] John Muir, "The Story of My Boyhood and Youth" in *EWDB,* 53.

Muir's young life in Scotland, and secondarily through the extension of his formative years in the Wisconsin frontier provided a gestalt of relations in which home in its fullest context is a "value-weighted place" at least partially defined through relations with nature.[281] For Muir, with reference to his autobiographical reminiscence of his young years, home was more than partially defined through relations with nature; it is suffused with nature. The importance of the related gestalts of a home, especially home during the young developmental years are really a part of oneself, or as Naess posits, "one's roots." The gestalt of his youth brings all relational elements, the I and the not-I, into a whole. For Muir, nature was interwoven into the fabric of his life, the birds, deer, meadows, lakes, forests, thunder storms and winter snow were relationally embedded with family, learning, labor, religion, and social relations.

This type of relational thinking is certainly a strange concept for Cartesian dualism, with its strict separation between fact and value, but nonetheless real and viable in the total relational field of a life. Following Cartesianism, the modern resourcist mindset, with its emphasis on the externality of humans to nature and the mantra of the 'greatest good for the greatest number' in regards to market driven commodity value, views relational thinking such as Muir's as 'mystical' or 'emotional' and therefore irrelevant for serious consideration. Naess, however, posits, "so-called mythic thought is gestalt thought", where the articulation or communication of a unit within a gestalt may be rich and meaningful through combinations of fact and value, the affective and the cognitive. For Muir, the seeds of this type of articulation and mythic thought were planted in his young years, but it took experience, reflection, and an evolving total view over time to truly bring them forward as an expression of his own ecosophy.

Geographical extension in Muir's realm of experience correlates with the evolution and articulation of his personal ecosophy. Leaving the farm in Wisconsin at the age of twenty-two, Muir's life path unfolded through the University of Wisconsin years, the two year sojourn in Upper Canada followed by a brief stint in Indianapolis whereupon a personal crisis culminated in his decision to embark on a thousand mile naturalist walk to the Gulf of Mexico. If one views a life lived as a gestalt, a total relational field, then one may also view particular stages, between turning points of a person's life as units within that gestalt. Relationally, the units are both informed and qualitatively infused by the total relational field as it exists at that time. Further, the units themselves also constitute gestalts and through their expansion of relations through experience, learning and emotion and shifts in perspective may inform and infuse the total relational field.[282] One may extrapolate therefore, that each turning point, each geographical, social, intellectual and emotional expansion of experience within Muir's life path contributes to the whole of his life, a gestalt ontology, which includes the evolution of his personal ecosophy.

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[281] Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, 62.

As discussed in a subsequent chapter addressing his years in Upper Canada, Muir's personal ecosophy was in a constant state of process, informed and infused by a myriad of relational experiences throughout his life. By the time Muir was in Cedar Keys, Florida, the first in-depth expression of his evolving ecosophy had emerged in his journal, a synthesis of all Muir's relational thought and experiences in life to that point. In his environmental biography of the young John Muir, Steven Holmes makes this very point, suggesting that the insights of scholars such as Cohen, Oelschlaeger and Turner, while interpreting the thousand mile walk as the beginning of Muir's mature philosophical position actually "…show how deeply Muir was embedded in previously developed patterns of imaging and approaching nature…"[283]

Within the journal the entries Muir wrote in Cedar Keys are the clearest representation, up to this point in his life, of relations between ideas, experiences and intuitions and feelings that coalesce into an ecocentric orientation. Muir's journal from the thousand-mile walk is academically well-tilled ground, with many scholars agreeing that Muir clearly articulates a man-in/of-environment philosophical premise in juxtaposition with his often misanthropic condemnation of the mainstream man-over-environment view. Elements of a foundational ecosophy with ecocentric overtones are found in Muir's observations. Sympathizing with bears and alligators, Muir asserts their equal right to live and "dwell happily" as members of God's family.[284] The "selfish propriety" of man is roundly condemned, and expressed as something akin to the contemporary ecocentric stance on species arrogance.[285] Life and death are viewed as natural, a part of a "joyous inseparable unity" in which "All is divine harmony."[286] Plants are endowed with sensation, minerals with the possibility of sensation, and all living beings, "earth-born mortals and our fellow mortals" are made from the "common elementary fund", the elements of the earth.[287] Value is conferred equally among men and alligators, for they too are "…beautiful in the eyes of God. They also are his children, for He hears their cries, cares for them tenderly, and provides their daily bread."[288]

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[282] As Naess explains the nature of gestalt ontology, using Beethoven's Fifth Symphony as an example, elements of phrases, themes and developments within each movement comprise a relational gestalt, which comprise the whole. But even the whole symphony is part of a larger gestalt experience of the concert event, where a larger relational gestalt includes the venue, the people attending, and what was experienced before the concert, including previous encounters of the symphony earlier in life. See also David Rothenberg, *Is It Painful to Think*, 159-60.

[283] Steven Holmes, *The Young John Muir*, 182.

[284] John Muir, "The Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf", in *EWDB*, 148.

[285] Ibid. 155.

Embedded within the journal passages lies an unfolding sense of identification with nature that marks Muir's growing intuitive empathy with nature. Identification with nature refers to a process in which we begin to see parts of nature are parts of ourselves, one sees oneself in the other, or feels empathy with the other in nature. In Muir's identification with nature, we see yet another element of Naess's articulation of the formation of an ecosophy. According to Naess, it is possible for identification to expand through gestalt relations until no perceptual separation exists between the empirical self and nature. While this may be viewed as sheer mysticism by the modern mind, Naess applies a caveat, "…a person is a part of nature to the extent that he or she too is a relational junction within the total field."[289] Nature mysticism is suffused with a feeling, an intuition of unity in all, but not to the loss of a sense of the self (the ego self) as a part of that unity.[290] In Muir's journal, identification is palatable in his empathy with the alligators, bears, "…the smallest transmicroscopic creature…" and "…plants which carry prickles…" but stops short of identification that relationally merges his ego self with all in nature. This would come later, during the years spent in Yosemite and the high Sierra.

From a sense of widening identification emerges a deep feeling of unity with nature, and with this a widening of individual concern. With an expansion of empathy to the wider world, there is a realization of a greater self, the ecological self. This process, from deeper identification to empathy to realization of unity in all to an extension of a small ego self outwards to a deeper ecological self, Arne Naess calls Self-realization. Although rather vague and resistant to concise definition, Self-realization underpins Naess' personal ecosophy and is foundational to describing the unfolding of Muir's ecosophy.

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[286] Ibid. 140.

[287] Ibid. 161.

[288] Ibid. 148.

[289] Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, 56.

[290] David Rothenberg, *Is it Painful to Think?* 93.

Self-realization is a process where through identification with all in nature we become aware of our 'ecological self', a self that is defined and enriched by all our constitutive gestalt relations, including foundational relations with nature. The self (noted using lower case 's') is gradually expanded through awareness towards our greater ecological Self (noted by upper case 'S'). We move through a process of relations from realization of our self to realization of our greater Self - the Self which is embedded within but also encompasses the complexity, symbiosis, diversity and unity of all Nature. The ecological Self imbues a kind of "all sided maturity" where the relations with all aspects of our life are explored, including our place and relation to nature.[291] It is a process of self-unfolding encapsulated in Naess' statement that all in nature has the "universal right to live and blossom."[292]

While admittedly vague, Naess is more interested in suggesting the *essence* of an intuition for Self-realization than a normative structure applicable in all instances, for the impetus for thought and action then stems from core intuitive values rather than an imposed normative ethics. This leaves the interpretation and systemization of a personal ecosophy up to the individual as part of the process of Self-realization. To that end, the parallels between the gradual unfolding of Muir's gestalt relations and the nuances of Self-realization help to illuminate the contemporary relevance of Muir's personal ecosophy. It is the deep intuitive source values that create the positive inclination to act, and in Muir's case these core values provided not only inspiration and guidance within his own life, but provide guidance for many others as well.

The thousand-mile walk to the Gulf may have distilled the gestalt relations of Muir's life into a mini-treatise of his thought, at least up to that point, but geographical extension of experience continues to underscore the evolution of his ecosophy. Cedar Keys was but one relational junction in a life long process of something akin to Naess' concept of Self-realization. From the Gulf of Mexico, Muir sailed for Cuba, spending close to a month wandering the Havana environs. Weak from a bout with malaria and unable to explore the tropical forests with sure health, Muir elected to sail to New York in order to book passage to San Francisco.

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[291] Arne Naess, "Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World", in *The Deep Ecology Movement*, Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue, eds., (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1995), 14.

[292] Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, 166.

California constitutes another major turning point in Muir's life, and a continued unfolding of relational gestalts that encompass greater depth and richness in Muir's total view. Hitherto Muir finds a previously unplumbed depth of wonder, visceral in experience, rich in meaning to him. The world becomes intensely and beautifully experienced through physical immersion and moments of deep intuition. Further, mountains begin to gain significance within the total relational gestalt.

> To lovers of the wild, these mountains are not a hundred miles away. Their spiritual power and the goodness of the sky make them near, as a circle of friends. They rise as a portion of the hilled walls of the Hollow. You cannot feel yourself out of doors: plain, sky, and mountains ray beauty which you feel. You bathe in these spirit-beams, turning round and round, as if warming at a camp-fire. Presently you lose consciousness of your own separate existence: you blend with the landscape, and become part and parcel of nature.[293]

Overlaying the clear and pointed articulation of the rights of nature in Cedar Keys are months of immersion in California's sun-suffused Twenty Hill Hollow. Health and strength are regained, and Muir rejoices in his own physical well-being. "If you are travelling for health…fill your pocket with biscuits, and hide in the hills of the Hollow, lave in its waters, tan in its golds, bask in its flower-shine, and your baptisms will make you a new creature indeed."[294] Health is coupled with an unfolding wonder at the diversity of plant and animal life, and deeper intimacy with the pastoral beauty of the Hollow nurtures an expansion of self into nature. Losing consciousness of his own separate self, expanding into the landscape, Muir begins to view himself as both relationally fused with the whole and a unique entity within the whole. Identification with nature in Twenty Hill Hollow is relationally complex, building from past experiential gestalts; scientific observations are melded with a sense of ease, an ease he did not often feel during the walk to the gulf. Botanical study is suffused with essence of sunlight, weather takes on moods. Muir's affective response to his embeddedness in the flowery hills moves through careful observation towards a nascent mysticism. But it would take prolonged immersion in the high Sierra to bring about the mystical mountaineer – an accretion of relational gestalts that add new layers of experience and meaning to Muir's unique ontology.

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[293] John Muir, "A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf" in *EWDB*, 182-3.

[294] Ibid. 182.

A great deal has been written regarding Muir's first summer in the Sierra Nevadas. His book, *My First Summer in the Sierra*, published in 1911, is usually regarded as the most spontaneous and clear expression of his mystical mountain thought. However, as Steven Holmes has cautioned, Muir wrote and rewrote his notes from this period of his life, with extensive revisions and additions to the original text, and Muir's 'immersion' experience during his first summer may not have had the profound 'conversion' effect that the 'Muir myth' generally purports.[295] Rather, Muir's first summer may be seen as a continuing process of relationally interpreting his current context with past life experiences, with botany remaining a familiar and comfortable relational vehicle for interaction with the Sierra environs. The first summer was important, but the importance of the gestalt relations of his Yosemite and high Sierra experiences extends throughout all the years he spent in the Sierra Nevadas. In the full breadth of his life, these years form the clearest articulation of his ecosophy.

The mountains were a sensory feast, opening up Muir's imaginative and intuitive powers. "It is easier to feel than to realize, or in any way explain, Yosemite grandeur."[296] He began to expand his methods of interaction and relations with his surroundings from long familiar botanical study to awareness of the larger relational gestalt of the mountains. Flowers, trees and meadows charmed him and offered the comfort of the familiar, but the great granite rock faces, the burnished natural pavements and peaks of the high Sierras inspired the need for prolonged and unmediated intimacy with the wild landscape. Mountaineering became *the* way; it engaged him in the deepest sense, it offered sheer visceral contact with rock and cliff, scree and peak, and sweat, effort, fatigue, exhilaration – pure physical sensuousness that created intense communion with the ineffable quality of the wild. For Muir, mountaineering became a method of inter-relating with nature on a deeper and more profound level; of rejecting religious pretensions, industrial age dualism that separated body from soul, and a sort of 'hell' of mindless, apathetic, lowland lifestyles. Musing much later in his life on the power of nature in the lives of young boys, Muir recounts a vignette of his childhood adventures in Scotland that suggests he viewed mountaineering as salvation.

> When I first heard of Hell: The servant girls very fond of telling us, if we did anything wrong, that we would be put in Hell, and be burned in that bottomless pit, and I imagined a great big, queer

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[295] Steven Holmes, "Rethinking Muir's First Summer in Yosemite" in *John Muir in Historical Perspective*, Sally Miller, ed., (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1999), 154.

[296] John Muir, "My First Summer in the Sierra" in *EWDB*, 238.

> concern, built up of masonry, like the old castle, only that the walls were all smudged and black like the inside of a chimney, and I did not care if they did put me in there, for I felt that I could speel oot (climb out)! And I imagined that it would be a mighty queer wall if I couldn't put some holes in that soot and climb out. Curious, the ideas we get! I really was never much frightened about Hell. I thought there really must be some way of climbing out of it, and it was to be done by climbing, you know, by mountaineering![297]

Hell, it appears, can be avoided by mountaineering. And hell for Muir could quite arguably be posited as a total separation of the body/spirit whole from nature. For Muir, no dualistic separation of spirit and body, fact and value, no "grizzly thorny ranks of cold enslaving 'musts'" of culture and religion would be too difficult to 'climb out of' through the positive state of mind and body gained while mountaineering.[298] As a central element in Muir's unfolding ecosophy, mountaineering combined all the joys, insights and inspiration as well as deprivation, discomfort and sometimes loneliness into what may be viewed as deliverance from mainstream ideologies. "In the midst of such beauty, pierced with its rays, one's body is all one tingling palate. Who wouldn't be a mountaineer! Up here all the world's prizes seem nothing."[299] Mountaineering became an escape, in one sense, from the dogmatic expectations of religious and cultural expectations of 'right' behavior, but in a deeper sense, was a continuation of his earlier need for greater identification with nature and divine essence suffusing all.

The methods, intent and the duration of Muir's mountaineering precede and clearly express Naess' own position on outdoor life within the Self-realization process. Naess' concept "friluftsliv" or "free air life", "open air life" or "nature life" as a "...positive state of mind and body in nature, one that brings us closer to some of the many aspects of identification and Self-realisation with nature..." are akin to Muir's mountaineering life.[300] Further, respect for landscape and all life, no-trace movement and camping, non-competitive rich interaction with nature, and fostering identification with nature through time are key elements of Naess's 'friluftsliv.' Naess also advocates minimal strain on nature and increased self-reliance within the carrying capacity of a landscape, and divesting technological mediation between self and nature. In short, going light into free nature.[301]

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[297] *John Muir Papers,* Series III C, file 08429, 48-9. First Draft Autobiography, Pelican Bay Manuscript.

[298] W.F. Badè, "The Life and Letters of John Muir" in *John Muir: His Life and Letters and other Writings*, 148. Letter from John Muir to Catherine Merrill, Yosemite Valley, July 12th, 1871.

[299] John Muir, "My First Summer in the Sierra" in *EWDB*, 246.

[300] Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle,* 178.

In Muir's case, elements of Naess' 'free air life' were embedded in his mountain years. "I went alone, my outfit consisting of a pair of blankets and a quantity of bread and coffee", Muir wrote of his extended forays into the high Sierra in the early 1870's.[302] Simplicity in technology creates no artificial barriers between the self and nature in gaining outdoor wisdom. "You don't have to do anything with the equipment question, just go do it, equipment should not be central to the activity."[303] The simplicity of Muir's approach to mountaineering allowed direct unmediated contact with nature, contact that was so immediate that "one is wholly free to enjoy self-forgetting."[304] Competitive goals, such as 'bagging peaks' with its quantitative focus on 'winning' was not Muir's way in the wild. Sauntering was more to his liking, an open process that allowed nature to steep into the self.

> Sauntering in any wilderness is delightful, through woods, rocks, bogs, plains and deserts, and green shaggy meadows, and over fields of snow and the crisp crystal prairies of the glaciers, drifting like thistledown responsive to every breeze of influence.[305]

A critical aspect of mountaineering as Muir practiced has to do with time. It takes time in unmediated nature to nurture the expansion of identification within nature. Free time in free nature – and lots of it. As Naess suggests, people need time to adjust and allow nature to work deeply through the self. "It is quite normal that several weeks must pass before the sensitivity for nature is so developed that it fills the mind."[306] For Muir, to "dwell confidingly and waitingly" with the mountains, to study them through "patient observation and constant brooding above the rocks, lying upon them for years as the ice did" was the process towards truth.[307] Muir's immersion in the Sierras was marked not in weeks, but years. Even when necessity kept him on the valley floor working as sawyer or occasional guide, wild nature was always accessible through 'Sabbath raids' into the high country.

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[301] Ibid. 179. During a lecture series at the University of Alberta in April 1996, Naess described 'free nature' as being nature not necessarily in wilderness form, but nature simply allowed free to be. He cautioned environmental educators to avoid the spectacular, to foster through sensitivity experiences in free nature anywhere, whether it be a natural urban park, a slough or marsh, or even a thicket in forest land.

[302] W.F. Badè, "The Life and Letters of John Muir", in *John Muir: His Life and Letters and other Writings,* 158.

[303] Personal notes from lecture by Arne Naess, "Outdoor Wisdom & the Central Study of Philosophy and Sociology of Sport", Van Vliet Centre, University of Alberta, April 2, 1996.

[304] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 170.

[305] Ibid. 300.

[306] Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, 179.

Mountaineering is a practical on-the-ground application of friluftsliv, where the intent and effects of the mountaineering experience greatly aid the process of Self-realisation. Direct physical and intuitive experience through 'free air life' opens multiple and complex relations with nature, and relational gestalts of experience inform and flavor expanding identification. Something akin to friluftsliv is what Muir advocated for people he knew and for the general public. In letters to friends and acquaintances, Muir began to cajole, admonish and even preach to get them out and *in* it. Jeanne Carr, his spiritual intimate and mentor was most assiduously pressed. "Would that I could have you here or in any wild place where I can think and speak! Would you not be thoroughly iced?" he argued, championing being 'iced' as a positive outcome from experiential immersion in the powerful beauty of glaciers.[308] From his own experience, Muir hoped that given time, effort and sensitivity, it was possible that people could reap the same joys, health and spiritual insight that had so enriched his own way of being.

It should be noted that Muir harbored reservation that *all* people were able to achieve such deep and meaningful relations with nature. He often expressed caustic disgust for the tourists whose "blank, fleshy apathy" seemed impervious to the "rock and water spirits of the place."[309] Borderline misanthropy notwithstanding, Muir's nascent activism for the preservation of wild places, and specifically for Yosemite underpin his first tentative forays into writing for the public. Published naturalist articles expounding on the unique beauty of Yosemite are often peppered with concern about the "unmitigated soreness of our Sierra Eden" and lamentable lack of political will in controlling excessive and damaging commercial development.[310] There lies a tension between Muir's need to encourage people to learn the lessons of rock and flower and his very real concerns that the development of commercial ventures to house, feed and entertain the visitors would compromise the very essence of what he was 'saying a word for'. In his concern about commercialism, Muir precedes Naess' position that humanity should strive to live and work within the ecological carrying capacity of any given landscape and to avoid "backwoods urbanization."[311]

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[307] W.F. Badè, "The Life and Letters of John Muir" in *John Muir: His Life and Letters and other Writings*, 158, 153.

[308] John Muir, *Letters to a Friend: Written to Mrs. Ezra S. Carr by John Muir*, 1866-1879, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915), 35.

[309] Ibid. 19.

[310] William F. Kimes and Maymie B. Kimes, *John Muir: A Reading Bibliography*, 4. See "Yosemite in Spring", New York Daily Tribune, July 11, 1872.

More importantly, through his growing need to preach the gospel of the wild, Muir models a critical element of the Self-realizationprocess. According to Naess, the process of gaining a wider and deeper perspective through Self-realizationrequires the increase of Self-realizationin others as well.

> Self-realizationis hindered if the Self-realizationof others, with whom we identify, is hindered. Love of our self will fight this obstacle by assisting in the Self-realizationof others according to the formula 'live and let live!' Thus, all that can be achieved through altruism – the *dutiful, moral* consideration of others – can be achieved – and much more – through widening and deepening our self. [312]

What Naess is saying is multi-faceted and beautifully applies to John Muir. Muir identifies not only with key individual people in his life who are relationally united within the total milieu, he also identifies strongly and richly with the whole of nature. His efforts to bring people to see the beauty and spiritual richness of nature, to get out and into it, are threefold in intent. First, he encouraged those closest to him to appreciate and become enriched through their own increased identification with nature. Secondly, he actively fostered increased identification with nature in the general public through his writing, public speaking and political activism. Through this work, he attempted to shift social views of nature towards a recognition of the intrinsic value of nature. Thirdly, nature's own universal right to 'live and blossom' is aided greatly through the expansion of humanity's deep identification with nature. One may venture than, that the intent behind Muir's great need to share the spiritual, physical and intellectual richness of his mountaineering experiences through encouraging nature tourism was an attempt to foster a new gestalt ontology in individuals and thus in society.

The impetus then for Muir to act with joy and respect in and for nature comes from the deep intuitions of his personal ontology. While altruism is commendable, and ethics and moral directives are necessary, truly beautiful action results from a deeper source than ought-to's and should-do's. As Naess has observed,

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[311] Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, 179.

[312] Arne Naess, "Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World" in *The Deep Ecology Movement*, 14.

"what we like to do and like to think depend on how we conceive the world…how reality is rather than what you ought to do and what you ought to think…therefore, I go into ontology: doctrines about the way things are."[313] For Muir, he consciously worked at shedding expectations tied to moral or cultural 'ought to do's' and embraced a process of exploration, of nature and of himself.

Muir's initial questioning of orthodox doctrine carries on through the unfolding process of Ecosophy "M". The questioning process is not restricted to religion only, for Muir also questions much within the modern progressive worldview. There is a rather pithy argumentative quality to this questioning that often colors Muir's personal ruminations and interactions with people. Many were treated to the sharp side of his tongue, especially those who insisted on narrowly defined codes of religious doctrine, of scientific absolutism, and political utilitarianism. As a philosopher in the process of constructing his own total view, he abhorred rigidity and "coarse-grained dogmatism" in all manifestations. Answering his brother David on a question of proper rites of baptism, Muir is blunt, "Imperious, bolt-upright exclusiveness upon any subject is hateful, but it becomes absolutely hideous and impious in matters of religion, where all men are equally interested."[314] What is more telling is after expounding his own views on religious baptism, he recounts his own baptism that very morning, first in sunshine, second in the rays emanating from flower corollas, and third, from the spray of Yosemite Falls. And thus by "immersion", then "pouring" and finally by "sprinkling" he dismisses the entire and nonsensical (to his mind) debate over how much water should be used in baptismal rites. Nature and God, he infers, are free of sectarian interpretations and dogmatic difficulties, and it would be better for David and his congregation to follow suit.

At times, Muir's negative comments on sectarian religious practices and uncompromising religious dogmatists have led some scholars to believe that he rejected Christianity outright; however, this is not apparent when viewing the content of his extent papers. Christianity was a foundational element in Muir's personal ecosophy, and it was Christianity he interpreted as compatible with the complexities of all relational gestalts in his experience. While rejecting his father's sectarian absolutism, he did not reject the idea that God was the source of all faith, and that nature was an immediate and uncorrupted source of insight into the divine. A passage taken from a letter Muir wrote to his friend Catherine Merrill perhaps best illustrates how he viewed his Christian foundations.

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[313] Rothenberg, David, *Is it Painful to Think?* 153.

[314] W.F. Badè, "The Life and Letters of John Muir" in *The Life and Letters of John Muir and other Writings*, 115. Letter from John Muir to David Gilrye Muir, April 10th, (1870).

> You say that good men are "nearer to the heart of God than are woods and fields, rocks and waters" Such distinctions and measurements seem strange to me. Rocks and waters, etc., are words of God and so are men. We all flow from one fountain Soul. All are expressions of one Love. God does not appear, and flow out, only from narrow chinks and round bored wells here and there in favoured races and places, but He flows in grand undivided currents, shoreless and boundless over creeds and forms and all kinds of civilizations and peoples and beasts, saturating all and fountainising all.
>
> You say some other things that I don't believe at all, but I have no room to say them nay; further – I don't stab the old grannies where I wasted so much time, the colleges of all kind, "Christian" and common, West and Northwest, with their long tails of pretensions. I only said a few words of free sunshine, using the dim old clouds of learning for a background.[315]

Leaving the 'pretensions' of doctrinal disagreements behind, Muir also acknowledges the 'dim old clouds' of his early religious education background. Through expanding gestalt relations, which included the influences of his Protestant childhood and youth, he had come to his own way of viewing the world. For Muir, God not only saturates all, He is the fountain source of nature of which man is equal to the rocks and waters – they are all 'words of God.'

In summary, Muir's hard work during the unfolding process of Ecosophy "M" sorted out and interpreted elements of his Christian foundations and his personal evolving philosophy in a way that sought consistency with his deep and resonant intuition of the divine in and of nature. Further, he had no problem conferring intrinsic value to nature as a whole, since all are 'words of God' then all have value through 'divine fiat'. Muir's concept of great diversity, complexity and inter-relatedness functioning as one great unified whole is indicative of his proto-ecological thought and is interwoven and consistent with his view of the divine in nature.

> In streams of ice, of water, of minerals, of plants, of animals, the tendency is to unification. We at once find ourselves among eternities, infinitudes, and scarce know whether to be happy in the sublime simplicity of radical causes and origins or whether to be sorry on losing the beautiful fragments which we thought perfect and primary absolute units; but as we study and mingle with nature more, the pain caused by the melting of all beauties into one First Beauty disappears, because, after their first baptismal submergence in fountain God, they go again washed and clean into their individualisms, more clearly defined than ever, unified yet separate.[316]

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[315] Ibid. 167-68.

[316] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *John of the Mountains,* 79-80. Journal excerpt from "Trip to Mount Clark and the Illilouette Basin, Thence up the Merced Canyon to Lake Nevada, Returning by Way of Cloud's Rest."

Mountaineering as discussed above is also a key element of Muir's personal ecosophy. Ecosophy "M" eventually becomes more rounded, unified yet rich with the gestalt relations of a life lived, experienced and reflected upon from youth to adulthood. The mountains and the process of mountaineering engaged all of Muir in a process of Self-realization involving the physical, spiritual, philosophical, relational, religious and cultural aspects of his life. Therefore, by drawing together the myriad relations of Muir's gestalt ontology, Ecosophy "M" on the deepest level reflects a plurality of intuitive foundations, some of which Muir struggled with to reach consistency between value premises. For the purposes of this discussion, Ecosophy "M" includes (but is not restricted to) John Muir's personally interpreted Christian beliefs, proto-ecological insights, acceptance of intrinsic value in nature simply through divine fiat, and the intuitive and imaginative power realized through mountaineering.

Conclusion

An ecosophy is a personal philosophical construct made up of four levels. At the deepest intuitive level are foundational philosophical and religious ideas and intuitions. The discussion of Ecosophy 'M' deals for the most part with this first level. From the first, or deepest level, ethical principles, norms and hypotheses may be formed, and out of these principles emerge lifestyle and behavior choices followed by practical action in concrete situations.[317] In this chapter section, I have only touched upon the first level - the source level of Muir's metaphysical intuitions. From this ultimate source level, normative ethics and practical action emerge. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the ethical construct of preservationism stems from a need to put Muir's ultimate intuitions, the heart-core of his deepest feelings and convictions, into practical action. How Muir put his principles into action was fraught with problems and dangers. Muir faced the same core problem the environmental community stills deals with today, where questions of values and ethics and are reduced to polarized conflicts of anthropocentric interest. The reality of the political world is a difficult forum, where the most dedicated and philosophically integrated people must work in the muddy waters of compromise. Nonetheless, as discussed above, it is a mark of the strength of his core ecosophy that Muir retained an integrated sense of his deepest values throughout the hard years of practical action.

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[317] Arne Naess, "The Apron Diagram" in *The Deep Ecology Movement*, 11-12.

Having discussed Ecosophy "M" up to the point when Muir resided in the Sierra Nevadas is not to construe the process ended there. The discussion of Muir's activist years underscores the evolution of his gestalt ontology. However, the core intuitive content of his ecosophy was manifested by this point, and remained a part of him for the rest of his life. That John Muir never wrote out a definite treatise of his thought in one single volume is true to the way he constructed his personal ecosophy. To glean snippets of pure Muir gold, one needs to wander far and wide in his extent writings, for his ideas and insights emerge through the myriad relational elements of his life. This inter-relational, whole life aspect to the construction of an ecosophy was an integral part of the Muir's life, and underlies in large part his continuing relevance to contemporary environmental debate. The method is the message.

We often get tangled up in labels and structures and linear thinking and forget to pay attention to the deeper insights of what it means to be human on this beautiful planet. Muir rejected labels and structures and walked out to find what it meant to truly be 'in' rather than 'on' the earth. His continuing relevance within contemporary environmental philosophy, environmental activism, and the post-modern debate about humanity's place in the world should be telling us something about the power of an ontological foundation in nature. It is important to remember that the amorphous root intuitions of a mountain mystic still resonate with people, and many people find elements within his ideas that they either adopt, or recognize as part of themselves already. The current plethora of interpretations on Muir's life, work and thought is a part of the post-modern ferment. While diverging to some extent in the range of interpretation, there is also an element of convergence on key themes that appear to strike personal chords with each individual. The range and the similarities are positive developments, for they continue to support the relevance of Naess' concept of gestalt ontology and the process of Self-realization. We may all find, to greater or lesser degree, core intuitive ideas in the life of John Muir and others that relationally contribute to our own way of being.

John Muir may be viewed as an individual with his own special way of being in the world. While it is not possible to consider Muir a member of the Deep Ecology movement, his life, work and thought contribute to many of the foundational intuitive, spiritual and philosophical tenets of the movement. On the question of environmental pragmatism, Muir was not an environmental pragmatist per se, but he did act pragmatically during his political and activist years with the Sierra Club. His personal ecosophy models an inter-relational and integrative maturity required to find a true sense of self in and of the world. As a mountain mystic tracing ancient glaciers in the high Sierra, and a practical activist recognizing and acting on the need to help shift society's worldview towards a more ecocentric perspective, Muir was simply being himself; a being of nature.

CHAPTER 3

Muir in Canada West (1864-1866) – Canadian Contributions to Ecosophy "M"

Introduction

> …wandering through innumerable tamarac and arbor vitae swamps, and forests of maple, basswood, ash, elm, balsam fir, pine spruce, and hemlock, rejoicing in their boundless wealth and strength and beauty, climbing the trees, revelling in their flowers and fruit like bees in beds of goldenrods, glorying in the fresh cool beauty and charm of the bog and meadow heathworts, grasses, carices, ferns, mosses, liverworts displayed in boundless profusion.[318]

John Muir entered Upper Canada in early spring of 1864 and did not return to the United States until March of 1866.[319] During his two year experience in Canada, Muir made the first of his long excursions in wild nature, invented and manufactured machinery in a rake and broom handle factory, and lived and worked with young Canadians who became life-long friends. Throughout the period, he struggled with a myriad of personal questions and dilemmas, most revolving around what he wanted to do with his life. His resolution of some of these questions and the lack of resolution in others underscore the importance of Muir's Canadian hiatus. As a distinctive episode of personal growth and maturity, Muir's Canadian experiences became part of the fabric of his life. While both informed and infused by the multiple facets of his experiences to that point, his Canadian years added dimensions of experience, thought and action.

For a full six months, from April to September 1864, Muir wandered throughout the southern regions of Upper Canada (present-day Ontario), captivated by the botanical richness and wild forest beauty of the region. This experience was his first truly independent and long-term excursion in wild nature. With winter coming on, Muir and his brother Daniel found work and a place to live at a wood-working mill near the town of Meaford on Georgian Bay. Muir would stay in Trout Hollow, just outside of Meaford, from October 1864 to March 1866. During the eighteen months of his Trout Hollow stay, Muir's life was a mix of hard work, occasional social interaction, botanical forays and lasting friendship. Although he planned on remaining in Canada indefinitely, a catastrophic fire destroyed the mill in late February 1866, effectively ending a wonderful period in the lives of the Trout Hollow 'family.' Muir returned to the United States in March 1866, and although he never revisited Ontario, the influence of his life in Canada and the ensuing friendships with the Trout Hollow family endured throughout his life.

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[318] W.F. Badè, "The Life and Letters of John Muir" in *The Life and Letters of John Muir and other Writings*, 70.

[319] 'Upper Canada' is used to describe pre-confederation Ontario during the period that Muir resided in Canada. 'Canada' did not come into being until Confederation in 1867, and was officially called 'British North America' up until that point. The term 'Canada West' was also used interchangeably with 'Upper Canada' during the pre-confederation era. For the purposes of this study, I use 'Upper Canada', 'Canada West' and 'Ontario' to describe the region that Muir worked and lived in from 1864-1866, even though Ontario did not officially come into being until Confederation in 1867.

In this chapter, the historical context of Muir's two-year stay in Upper Canada is dealt with in depth. Cultural, social, religious, interpersonal and natural contexts underpin Muir's Canadian experiences and how they related to his life, work and thought. In 1864, Upper Canada was largely frontier, with confederation three years in the future. The social and religious temper of frontier communities such as Meaford greatly influenced the lives of the pioneer citizens. This too became a part of Muir's Canadian experience and contributed to his life path and religious beliefs. Personal friendships, community interaction, practical mill-work and his continuing love of botanical exploration greatly enhanced Muir's life during the Canadian period – contributions that in many ways would have long and marked effect upon his life. Within these multi-layered contexts, the ever present beauty of nature permeated Muir's Canadian experience, nurturing a growing awareness of what would eventually become his own ecocentric philosophy and subsequent political and literary activism in defence of wilderness.

The Wandering Botanist – Awareness through the Heart of a Flower

Muir's route into Canada

John Muir boarded the train in Portage, Wisconsin on March 1st, 1864, but from that point it is difficult to trace his exact route into Canada. Muir's first biographer, William Frederic Bade, working from portions of Muir's Canadian herbarium, does not specifically address the question of how and where Muir entered Canada in the spring of 1864.[320] In her biography of Muir, Linnie Marsh Wolfe believes he walked through Michigan to Lake Superior and then crossed over into Canada. Wolfe asserts that Muir explored the islands between Lake Huron and Georgian Bay, collecting plant specimens on St. Joseph's and Manitoulin Islands, and then in early April walked east along the northern shore of Georgian Bay to arrive in Simcoe County by April 20th, the first fully dated and place-named specimen in his Canadian herbarium.[321] However, recent evidence does not totally support Wolfe's assertion of Muir's route into Canada.

Muir's herbarium provides eleven concrete dates and place names that prove helpful in determining, in a general way, where he wandered in southern Ontario in the months of April to September 1864.[322] On April 20th, Muir collected and pressed a specimen of Leather Wood, (Dirca palustris, Thymelaceae) in Simcoe County.[323] On May 4th, he was still in Simcoe County, and pressed a specimen of Red Maple, or Swamp Maple (Acer rubrum, Aceraceae). On May 5th, the ice on the Great Lakes succumbed to the spring thaw, opening the waters to navigation.[324] Muir was still botanizing in Simcoe County on May 16th, collecting specimens of Mountain Current and Iron Wood. The first sailing of the steamer "Algoma" occurred on May 19th in 1864, linking Collingwood, Owen Sound, Killarney, Little Current, Bruce Mines and Sault Ste. Marie with regular mail and commercial service. There is no mention of Muir on the passenger manifest.[325] The "Ploughboy" also sailed during this period, however, it too would have been confined to the spring thaw date of May 5th, 1864.

From these records, it is clear Muir did not sail from the northern reaches of Lake Huron to arrive in Simcoe County by April 20th, as the ice did not depart until May 5th. Wolfe's assertion that Muir walked along the northern shores of Georgian Bay to Simcoe County is improbable. A solitary walk over 300 kilometres of rough wilderness in early April, through residual winter snow and volatile weather is unlikely even for someone with the tenacity of Muir. Further, had Muir completed such a dangerous and epic journey during this first major excursion, he would have at least alluded to it in subsequent correspondence or autobiographical fragments. No mention, however, of such a long and dangerous route or a voyage across the Great Lakes exists in Muir's reminiscences or letters to friends and family. Muir's lack of notice regarding his route into Canada more likely indicates that he traveled an ordinary route of little interest – simply by railway to Toronto, and from Toronto made his way north to Simcoe County, most probably by way of Yonge Street.

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[320] W.F. Badè, "The Life and Letters of John Muir" in *The Life and Letters of John Muir and other Writings*, 117. "…by the month of May he had penetrated northward as far as Simcoe County."

[321] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, 91.

[322] "John Muir's Herbarium – Canada, Indiana", Container List, Archival Manuscript Collections, John Muir Historic Site, National Parks Service, Martinez, California.

[323] References to Latin names of specimens are noted as Muir wrote them in his herbarium, and are not necessarily referenced with correct contemporary classification.

[324] Scott Cameron, "How John Muir Got to Meaford", Canadian Friends of John Muir, Meaford, Ontario. See website: http://www.johnmuir.org, accessed September 24, 2000.

[325] Ibid.

Wolfe's reference to Muir having gathered and pressed plant specimens in St. Joseph's and Manitoulin Island is noted as "MS. Reminiscences of William Trout"[326]. However, William Henry Trout's published family history does not contain a single reference to Muir's route into Canada.[327] The only reference available that alludes to Muir being in the northern reaches of Lake Huron in 1864 is found in Peter L. Trout's reminiscence, "What I Know About John Muir."

> From what I learned from Dan Muir, he and his brother John started out on a botanizing tour in Northern Wisconsin…I also understand that they also botanized through Northern Michigan but of this I am not very sure. They had specimens from St. Joseph's Island, Manitoulin Island and the Peninsula between Lake Huron and the Georgian Bay and at Owen Sound…[328]

Peter Trout's recollection has John and Daniel Muir Upper Canada on a botanizing tour that started in northern Wisconsin. This did not occur, as Daniel Muir joined his brother in mid-summer 1864, and the two then spent time wandering and gathering botanical specimens in the region. Peter Trout's recollection of specimens collected from St. Joseph's and Manitoulin Island is feasible, for the two brothers could have booked an excursion on the steamers plying the Great Lakes.[329] The timing of when the brothers met does not support the suggestion that they entered Upper Canada in early spring through Sault Ste. Marie, and the fact remains that Muir was in Simcoe County at least two weeks before the ice left the Great Lakes in 1864.

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[326] *Linnie Marsh Wolfe Papers*, Holt Atherton Archives, University of the Pacific, Stockton, California,Notes, 353.

[327] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History* (Milwaukee: Meyer-Rotier Printing Co., 1917).

[328] Peter Laird Trout, "What I Know About John Muir", unpublished manuscript reminiscence, undated. Original manuscript currently in possession of Scott Cameron, Canadian Friends of John Muir, Meaford, Ontario.

It is also noteworthy that Peter Trout's recollection was written 49 years after Muir entered Upper Canada, which may explain certain inconsistencies.[330] Wolfe's oblique reference to "a hint in a subsequent letter" that sheds light on Muir's route into Canada also remains unknown.[331]

Muir's route into Canada and his movements between March 1st and April 20th remain unknown, but on reviewing the evidence, the most feasible route would have been a journey into Upper Canada via rail, followed by a walk north into the Simcoe Lake area in early spring, 1864.

Landscape of Southern Ontario

Muir was immersed in the landscape of southern Ontario by mid-April 1864. Farms, towns and frontier settlements lined the shores of Lake Ontario but thinned in affluence and influence through the forests and swamps to the north. The character of the landscape itself, overwritten and formed by the ancient ice sheets and readable by the discerning eye did not inspire comment from Muir in view of glacial origins.[332] For Muir, it appeared the land simply provided an undulating backdrop to the green beauty of spring and his intense interest in botanical collection.

Southern Ontario is a landscape both subtle and sublime. From the northern border of the United States to Manatoulin Island, it weaves evidence of glacial ages over Paleozoic bedrock of shale and limestone.

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[329] Patricia Jasen, *Wild Things – Nature, Culture and Tourism in Ontario 1790 – 1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Inc., 1995), 80.

[330] In his recollection, Peter Trout refers to *The Atlantic Monthly* pre-publication of Muir's autobiography, *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth*, which was printed in four consecutive installments from November 1912 to February 1913. See also W.F. Kimes and M.B Kimes, *John Muir – A Reading Bibliography*, Articles 311-314, 88.

[331] Wolfe, 91. A search of the *Linnie Marsh Wolfe Papers*, housed at the Holt Atherton Archives, University of the Pacific, Stockton, California, failed to illuminate the "hint in a subsequent letter".

[332] *John Muir Papers,* Series III C, Reel 45, accession number 08428. The only reference I have found that Muir noted the glacial origins of the southern Ontario landscape is the short notation "Gl deposits" in a sidenote of a working manuscript of the second volume of his autobiography.

Wide low valleys, ancient glacial lakeshores and rugged cliffs above clear waters are laid over with the signs of four successive Pleistocene ice periods.[333]

The land lies in generally low relief, broken by a notable exception. The Niagara Escarpment rises as a long spine of hard bedrock near Rochester, New York, and curves around the southwestern shore of Lake Ontario, wending north-northwest through the Bruce Peninsula, submerging and then reappearing in Manitoulin, Drummond and St. Joseph islands. Just west of the escarpment near present day Collingwood, an arch of bedrock rising over 1700 feet above sea level forms the Dundalk upland. The escarpment slopes upwards from the west-southwest, ending in characteristic craggy cliffs and ridges to the east-northeast. River valleys from pre-glacial times mark the drainage of the escarpment slope, the Beaver River Valley with its south-southwest run distinctive of this ancient period.[334] Other rivers plunge over the escarpment, wearing gorges through the bedrock strata and creating harbours such as at Owen Sound and Colpoys Bay. East of Owen Sound, the Bighead River flows from the escarpment uplands, winding its way through a gentle forested valley to eventually join Georgian Bay at present day Meaford.

During the Wisconsin glaciation period, large masses of ice advanced and with crushing efficiency swept up parts of the stratified bedrock, pulverizing and mixing it into glacial till. Two main lobes of the ice periods pushed into the south Ontario region, one extending from the east, the other dropping down from the north. Scouring and pushing, the two glacial lobes shoved deposits of mixed detritus across the land in the form of terminal and lateral moraines. The moraines remain, creating regional elevations over 1000 feet above sea level, and curving to outline the shape of the lost glaciers.

In most of the region the molding of the resultant glacial till layers by the advance and retreat of the glaciers has given the land its present character. The landscape can be deceptive, for in many areas its gentle nature does not speak boldly to the dramatic power of its creation. Long low flutings of glacial drift, and the smooth oval hills called drumlins were created by receding glaciers. Kames and eskers also formed during the retreat of the ice sheets litter the landscape, and ancient beaches of long gone glacial lakes may be found kilometres from the present shorelines.

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[333] L.J. Chapman and D.F. Putnam, *The Physiography of Southern Ontario*, 2d ed. Ontario Research Foundation. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966). Preface to the first edition.

[334] Ibid. 11.

As April moved into May, Muir continued his wandering route through the forests and scattered settlements of Simcoe County. Searching the fresh young plants for the odd or unknown, stopping occasionally to make a plant's acquaintance, Muir walked through the townships of Guillumbury, Tecumseh, Adjala and Amaranth. Although Muir studied glacial landscape formation at the University of Wisconsin with Professor Carr, his primary focus during this long, wild ramble was on botany. So intent was he in his exploration of this discipline that he either missed or perhaps passed over any glacial evidence.

> Much of Adjala and Mono is very uneven and somewhat sandy; many fields here are composed of abrupt gravel hillocks; inhabitants are nearly all Irish. Amaranth, Luther, and Arthur abound in extensive Tamarac and Cedar swamps, dotted with beaver meadows.[335]

Muir's 'abrupt gravel hillocks' were most likely glacial moraine deposits common throughout the Nattawasaga basin, and the swamps and beaver meadows a result of the outwash of huge amounts of sand and silt from the Nottawasaga River during the glacial retreat. That Muir was not sensible or openly appreciative to glacial landscape formation at this point is interesting. Muir was certainly versed in the glacial theory of the day, having studied Louis Agassiz's "*Etudes sur les glaciers*" under the tutelage of Dr. Ezra Carr at the University of Wisconsin, and participated in field trips around Madison to study glacial evidence within the landscape.[336] Within the autobiographical notes of his Canadian experiences written much later in life, Muir made only one small margin reference to the presence of glacial deposits, but never expanded upon this intent within any working manuscript.[337] It is apparent that Muir did not view the glacial history of the Ontario landscape as particularly central to his Canadian experience.[338]

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[335] W.F. Badè, *The Life and Letters of John Muir,* 118.

[336] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness,* 76-77.

[337] *John Muir Papers,* Series III C, Reel 45, accession number 08428. Revised autobiographical fragment circa. 1910. Muir died before the draft manuscript of the second volume of his autobiography could be completed.

[338] Ibid. Series III C, Reel 45, accession number 08428, Reel 46, accession number 08429. Many of Muir's autobiographical fragments are found in the "Pelican Bay Manuscript", an autobiographical reminiscence dictated to a stenographer in August/September1908. Muir was 70 years old at the time, and his reminiscences are influenced by a long life fully and eventfully lived. However, the relative importance of certain Canadian events and experiences may actually be underscored by Muir's recollection of them at this late date.

On the world but not in it – a period of personal indecision and searching

Late in life, Muir began to prepare the second volume of his autobiography, a manuscript he loosely titled *"Trip to Canada & Cuba."*[339] Muir intended the book to continue his life story where *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth* left off. "I was only leaving one University for another, the Wisconsin University for the University of the Wilderness" he wrote, and assigned his first semester in the wild forests of Canada West. What is particularly interesting is how Muir intended to separate his autobiography and group the stages of his life into specific volumes.

Muir's intention with the second autobiographical volume was to begin with his Canadian adventures and life in Trout Hollow, briefly describe his experience in Indianapolis, and then relate his experiences and thoughts during his four month walk from Indiana to Florida and subsequent sojourn in Cuba.[340] Muir's journal of the walk to the Gulf of Mexico was minimally edited and published after his death through the efforts of Muir's first biographer, William F. Badè.[341] In keeping with Muir's intention, the first publication of *A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf* included an introduction that referred to Muir's Canadian and mid-west prairie experiences.[342]

In Muir's own retrospective look at his life, he includes Canada, Indianapolis and the 1000-mile walk to the Gulf of Mexico into what becomes a period of ferment, indecision, crisis, and a final leap of faith into his real 'wish' as opposed to what he 'feels' he must do. Wilderness immersion is the experiential cornerstone throughout the period, starting with his first 6-month excursion in Canada, and culminating with a 4-month walk of a thousand miles from Wisconsin to Florida. For the first time in his life, he was completely alone, immersed in wild beauty, free of University classes and study, independent of immediate family expectations and concerns, and relatively free of social constraints.[343]

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[339] Ibid. Series III C, Reel 41, accession number 08428. Muir's famous working and reworking of draft manuscripts produced a confusing plethora of variations on a single manuscript. This particular manuscript includes a typescript of his Canadian experiences with many hand-written (some indecipherable) side notes. The side notes are of interest as they provide clues as to Muir's intent to include Canadian events and experiences previously unrecorded. Although W.F. Badè included many of these events, he did not include the information within these side notes, which I now include to provide further insight into Muir's Canadian experience.

[340] Ibid. Series III C, Reel 41, accession number 08428. In a hand written title at the top of one of his reworked autobiographical fragments, Muir groups "Trip to Canada & Cuba", implying an autobiographical grouping of his Canadian experiences with the long walk to the Gulf of Mexico and month long sojourn in Cuba. It appears that Muir not only grouped his autobiographical sequences temporally, but also experientially. This brings his Canadian experiences and the 1000 Mile Walk to the Gulf within Muir's own set context of immersion into the 'University of the Wilderness.'

[341] W.F. Kimes and M.B. Kimes, *John Muir: A Reading Bibliography*, 98.

[342] Ibid.

Muir's Canadian botanical excursion was his first long term, solitary wilderness experience. During these wandering months, he went through a spectrum of emotional, physical, and spiritual insights that contributed to his choices of life direction and the formation of his personal philosophy. Later, Muir would note the period after leaving the University of Wisconsin as being a time of personal indecision and confusion, where the only deep contentment found was in the beauty and harmony of nature. An excerpt from his autobiographical notes brings this time of deep personal questioning into focus.

> Shortly after leaving college I began to doubt whether I was fully born. Past all controversy I was *on* the world but was I really *in* it. I was tormented with the soul-hunger of wh'[ich] we hear so much nowadays, that longing and vague unrest regarded as proof of immortality. This was the time to when all the world is said to lie before us for choice, when armed with small bits of lessons from school and church we are to be the architects of our own fortunes, build our existences as a carpenter a house, hack and hew and make hard conscious efforts as we go, add this and that by dint of sheer (unsunned, unnourished) ignorant will.[344]

Embedded in this passage are many indications of what would become Muir's unique and highly personal worldview. He struggles with a sense of dislocation, of a lack of feeling embedded *in* the world. The 'world' Muir is talking about is not only the human social community, but the community of nature. There is also distinct rejection of the 'hard conscious efforts' and 'sheer …ignorant will' to build his 'fortune', the hard imposition of which is 'unsunned' (removed from nature) and therefore is 'unnourished' in the most foundational and soul-nurturing sense. To 'hack' and 'hew' is also indicative of the brute force he felt was needed to *make* him take the inadequate lessons of school and church and conform to the way all "…good boys are supposed to walk."[345] Indecision, confusion, and a personal testing of his options were certainly a part of Muir's Canadian years. Resolution to these concerns would take longer, tenuously arrived at after a period of exploration into socially 'acceptable' work contrasted with the spiritual, intellectual and emotional nurturing of wild nature. For Muir, resolution of chronic 'soul-hunger' and 'vague unrest' would become a deferral of decision, giving him indefinite time to explore his deep wish to truly be *in* nature.

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[343] Muir's Canadian botanical excursion was not his first, as he experienced a three-week botanical foray with two fellow students into Iowa in July 1863. However, the Canadian experience was Muir's first solitary venture, the duration and scope unprecedented to that point.

[344] Robert Engberg and Donald Wesling, eds., *John Muir: To Yosemite and Beyond*, 27-8. See also *John Muir Papers,* Series III C, accession number 08041.

[345] Ibid.

> Accordingly, leaving books and life plans and all the beaten Charts of the religious believer, and fortunes from here to heaven, I went strolling off into the woods botanizing, wandering at will in bog and meadow, along stream banks, in flat Illinois prairies and in pine and hemlock woods around the Great Lakes…How fresh and Godful the world began to appear. The only exception to complete contentment was the lingering notion instilled from childhood that I had work to do as part of society. I must choose a profession and settle down, stand still and be a pillar in family, at school, or such like in a church. But Nature held me afield. I lingered in woods and bogs in pursuit of science. Botany and geology led me on, or rather I allowed those sciences to pursue me, for though I studied hard, all kinds of wild beauty was allowed to come in me, to draw and hold me as they were able.[346]

Further clues to the Canadian period of Muir's life may be gleaned from this excerpt. The process of eventually deferring all 'expected' options to wander off 'botanizing' took personal courage and a commitment to listen to heart-deep wishes. Getting to this point was the result of a long experimental process to which Muir's Canadian hiatus contributed in no small degree. Muir's rejection of the 'beaten Charts' of religion also indicate that this period contributed to his deep questioning and eventual rejection of the dogmatic tendencies of evangelical Protestantism. Again, this process continued from his initial divergence from his father's strict and over-zealous religious views, through his University of Wisconsin years, and was certainly one aspect of his Canadian experience. As will become apparent later in this chapter, Muir's personal construction of a critical part of his religious worldview was influenced during his Canadian sojourn. Muir's participation in organized church functions in Meaford as well as his growing spiritual connection to wild nature contributed to a sort of comparative deliberation on how he felt God and God's Creation infused his life.

Nature was, according to the Muir of the late 1870's, the most profound draw during this period of his life. While laying a mantle of respectability through the auspices of scientific study helped justify the choice of becoming a wandering naturalist, Muir also is clear that the lessons of nature were not so much gained from deduction as from induction, or rather an infusion of beauty, harmony and profound sense of the divine. Wild beauty came *to* him, to 'draw' and 'hold' him. This quality of openness to the ineffable in nature, planted like a small seed in his Scottish childhood, grew to greater realization during his young life in Wisconsin and the two-year stay in Canada West. Long term immersion in the wild, the hallmark of Muir's singular spiritual, intellectual, physical and emotional openness to nature and the divine reached new levels of maturation in the forests, bogs and fields of Ontario.

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[346] Ibid.

It is important to note, that while the blend of science and deep spiritual feeling infused Muir's long botanical walk through southern Ontario, this amalgam was not unique to Muir, indeed, a strong naturalist tradition linking science, religion and nature had been evolving in Upper Canada for decades, and was well and truly fledged by 1864.[347] By the 1850's, localized scientific institutions and organized naturalist circles had grown out of a keen interest in science and natural history – specifically the collection, description and classification of flora and fauna. There was still a great deal to be learned of the diversity of plant and animal life in areas that had been settled, let alone the pioneer hinterlands, and many took to the study of natural history as both a worthwhile scientific pursuit as well as a stimulating and culturally acceptable pastime.[348]

The study of natural history in Canada bridged an era between the localism of natural history societies, the egalitarian pursuit of information by lay naturalists, and the eventual formation of the Royal Society, a national body dedicated to internationally recognized scientific work.[349] Muir's first extended botanical ramble in the wilds of southern Ontario was in keeping with a long tradition of natural history of collecting specimens and cataloguing species throughout Upper and Lower Canada.

Interestingly, Muir's focus of discerning divinity within Nature was also a hallmark of the pursuit of natural history in Upper Canada. Natural theology, a legacy from natural history in Britain, sought to uncover the work of God in nature, and provided another powerful *raison d'être* for the pursuit of scientific knowledge.[350] "Natural theology gave to natural history a legitimacy and status in Victorian evangelical culture that went beyond practical utility."[351] For Muir, the pursuit of scientific knowledge underpinned his long term wilderness immersion, but, as we shall see later in the chapter, natural theology and the pursuit of traditional natural history within the culture of Upper Canada faced a tremendous shift in social and religious perspective during the mid-Victorian era; shifts that influenced Muir's life and evolving ecosophy.

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[347] Carl Berger, *Science, God and Nature in Victorian Canada,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), xi, 5.

[348] Ibid. 15.

[349] Ibid. 18-19.

[350] Ibid. 31.

While a brief look at the Canadian period from Muir's personal, late 1870's perspective is helpful, it is also necessary to view Muir's impressions, interactions with people and nature, hardships, joys and increasing maturation within the context of Upper Canada in the 1860's. With this in mind, an accounting of his frontier ramblings and eventual habitation near Meaford illuminates much of Muir's later recollection of this period of personal indecision and searching.

'Glorious Freedom' – a six-month botanical bath

Muir's Canadian botanical excursion provided a level of independence and personal autonomy previously unrealized. Although Muir enjoyed his brother's companionship during the latter part of the six-month, flowery pilgrimage, he initially wandered alone through the rough graveled roads and deep woods trails of Canada West. Among the scattered clearings he met friendly settlers, heartened that most were "…Scotch, English, and Irish, mostly Scotch."[352] The proliferation of Scottish farmers provided a potent antidote to the occasional loneliness he felt while tramping the quiet roads and wild pathways. Finding people akin to his own family and friends, with the same Scottish cadence and hard working practicality helped Muir feel a sense of the safe and familiar. "Found Dunbar people, much to my surprise" he later noted and "…spent a pleasant day with them rehearsing Dunbar matters."[353] But for a decision by his father made during the Atlantic crossing from Scotland in 1849, Muir realized that his family could have been part of the settling of Canada West and the people he met his neighbors.[354] It helped somewhat to alleviate his loneliness and sense of dislocation to find people of his own background in the backwoods, making this first extensive excursion less an exercise in complete isolation as a point to point ramble between hospitable homesteads.

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[351] Ibid. 32.

[352] W.F. Badè, *The Life and Letters of John Muir,* 123.

[353] Ibid. 119.

[354] John Muir, "The Story of My Boyhood and Youth", in *EWDB*, 44. "My father started with the intention of going to the backwoods of Upper Canada" Muir wrote in his autobiography. However, his

Muir's observation of 'mostly Scotch' with Irish and English immigrants transplanted into the 'Queen's bush' of the Canadian frontier is historically accurate. The region was initially settled by immigrants from Great Britain and by United Empire loyalists who fled America because of their sympathy with the British Crown.[355] Further, de-commissioned British military and British, Scots, Irish and German immigrants brought much of the old homeland with them in terms of work ethics, religion, and practicality. With a singular Canadian trait, the immigrants meshed old-world culture with the realities of their new home, utilizing both a practical work ethic with opportunistic settlement of the Canadian frontier. For Muir, this would not have been fundamentally different from his own experiences on the family farm; however, there were some incidences that were markedly Canadian in context.

Muir intended to enlarge on several Canadian incidents and experiences in the second volume of his autobiography.[356] As vignettes of his Canadian sojourn, they were elements of Muir's Canadian years, and indicate the relative importance accorded them within this period of his life. In a draft manuscript of the second volume of his autobiography, Muir added written side-notes as to what he thought pertinent regarding his Canadian years. He included "farm life, meeting people from Dunbar, Hard work of clearing, Highlanders etc near Bradford, The Campbells."[357] On a subsequent page he added,

> "Enlarge here, sugar making, fishing, farming, spring thaw, breaking up of ice on rivers. Gl[acial] deposits, coons. Etc. etc. My inventions. Getting up [in the] morning, cutting the wheel loose from ice with chisel on long pole, to make models and patterns for castings, glory of Ind[ian] summer, Taking leave of my good friends the Trouts, money settlements.[358]

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father was convinced by fellow immigrants to settle in Wisconsin or Michigan as the Canadian backwoods "…were so close and heavy that a man might wear out his life in getting a few acres cleared of trees and stumps."

[355] Louis Gentilcore, ed., *Ontario: Studies in Geography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 23, 28.

[356] *John Muir Papers*, Reel 45, accession number 08428, autobiographical fragment. Muir wrote at the top of this working draft, "Beginning of 2[d] Vol. of Auto – Trip to Canada and Cuba."

[357] Ibid.

[358] Ibid.

In addition to the draft of the second volume of his autobiography, these notes indicate a diverse range of personal experience for Muir during the Canadian period. The resulting picture of Muir's Canadian experience is remarkably rich, even with the limitations of his notes and letters and other associated primary historical data.

During one of his short working stays at a farm that spring, Muir participated in a uniquely Canadian spring celebration with local people – a time of merriment and general thanksgiving that spring had arrived after the long hard winter. Amid the residual snow-banks and warm spring sunshine, the sap of maple trees had begun to flow, signaling the spring ritual of tapping and processing maple syrup and sugar. Although he makes no mention of where this event occurred, Muir obviously enjoyed participating in what is now a cherished Canadian tradition.

> In the spring when the maple sap began to flow all the young people had merry, merry times, shared too by their elders who remembered their own young days. The sap was boiled in the woods, and when sugaring off at a certain stage it made splendid wax which was cooled in the snow. A big fire was made and the evening spent around it eating maple "wax", and later on, "sugaring off" the sugar also.
>
> …other amusements were meetings for song singing and general merry-making, but dancing was seldom indulged in, being frowned upon by their pious elders.[359]

Muir was certainly well versed in the expectation of pious deportment as defined by his father, so would not have been surprised that dancing was discouraged. Having noted the settler's faithful adherence to attending church and living a life of piety, Muir did not mention any specific church or denomination. By the time he dictated these autobiographical notes over fifty years later, memory and the relative importance of denominational differences were obscured. Markedly, the importance of fun and merry-making, of enjoying the sweet gift of the maple trees, and the spontaneous joyful gatherings that marked the beginning of life giving spring remained a potent memory.

Not only did Muir intend to include a description of the spring maple sap event in his autobiography, but a Muir sketch titled "Maple Sugar Making", although undated, is believed to have been sketched during his

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[359] *John Muir Papers*, Reel 50, accession number 08432, 171 F.

Canadian wanderings.[360] The sketch is an early example of a practice that Muir would continue throughout his life. Detailed, concise and exactly rendered pencil sketches of particular places, scenes and specific elements of nature, such as creeks, trees, and later, glacial evidence in mountain ranges provided Muir with tangible examples of things he wished to remember in detail. That Muir chose to render a detailed drawing of maple sugar making begs the question, why? Most probably, the brief celebration of maple sugar making would have been a happy highlight during his first lonely months of wandering. The delight of a natural confection, synonymous with the advent of spring, as well as a welcome change to palates accustomed to plain winter fare may also have played a part in Muir's wish to remember the event. Brief or not, the fun would have appealed to his youthful spirit, and the celebration he would have viewed as life affirming – a bright spot in the hard lives of the settlers.

The rough and often trackless way Muir followed during his first months in Canada West provided many stiff lessons in wilderness living. While on a three-week ramble with friends the previous summer, Muir had wandered without breakfast and slept in the open, but he had the security of companionship and knew the excursion would be short lived. His wanderings in Simcoe, Adjala, Mono and adjacent counties of Canada West were often challenging, he was often out at night without shelter, occasionally hard pressed to find food, and completely on his own. At times awash with despondency and loneliness, Muir began to learn how to deal with the two contradictory aspects of his own nature. The gut-deep need to follow his true wishes, to explore, to delve, to be literally lolling belly to earth in nature and feeding on "God's abounding inexhaustible spiritual beauty bread" pressed up hard against the need to fill a growling stomach and find the warmth of human companionship.[361] It would be a life long balancing act - a dichotomy that underlay much of what would be his greatest joys and greatest regrets. Muir struggled with this in Ontario, more so than he had at any other point in his life thus far. This was, to be certain, his first long term wilderness excursion and with it came the questions, the angst and sometimes the fear of being completely dependent upon his own resources.

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[360] *John Muir Papers*, Series IV, Fiche 2, accession number 00140, "Maple Sugar Making" drawing, graphite, 28x31 cm, believed to be in Canada, ca. 1865.

[361] W.F. Badè, *The Life and Letters of John Muir*, autobiographical sketch, 71.

An empty stomach is a practical sort of concern, and with true Scots practicality Muir managed to make his way through the Canadian backwoods without any severe breaks in sustenance. Occasionally, he "had to stop again and again in all sorts of places when money gave out…" [362] Finding work at the small wilderness farmsteads was not a problem, there was no shortage of the same hard drudging labor of his Wisconsin youth that had bound him to servitude under his father's 'generalship'. Although he did not actively seek people in the forests of Upper Canada, from the necessity Muir came in contact with the pioneers and learned "…something of their lives."[363] During these periodic stops he chopped firewood, cleared land for cultivation and graded the rough hillocks and clearings into a semblance of arable land. Having seen how life-destroying toil put many into early graves in Wisconsin, he saw the same drive to subdue and carve a life from the bush in Canada West. Harsh pioneer life in Canada was bound as much by immediate necessity and survival as a need to create a permanent homestead and security for the future.

In preparation for the second volume of his autobiography, Muir intended to include a lengthy account of the labor-intensive stages of clearing land in the Canadian frontier. Within the context of his Canadian sojourn, Muir's personal experience with this hard physical work shows a deep understanding of the difficult lot of Canadian pioneers. He described the felling of great groves of oak, elm and maple, "…beautiful trees simply slashed down…"and the laborious methods of burning the immense piles of wood. [364] "Plenty of whiskey was said to make the work light" he noted.[365] The rough clearings filled with coarse debris, stumps and uneven ground he recognized as a reality of pioneer life, but there was also a realization of wild beauty lost - of nature subdued by necessity.

The first rough clearings were immediately put to use, with scattered plantings of potatoes and wheat: a survival planting. Often this meager crop was the only staple food the pioneers had for the following winter. One frosty morning, while walking the forests west of Simcoe County, Muir came upon a farmwife beside a rough wheat field. The frost had nipped the ripening heads of the crop and the magnitude of her despair at the loss, so critical to survival, was immediately apparent. The woman's plight made a strong impression on Muir, for years later he recalled her lament and wrote of it using Scots diction, a sure sign of his empathy.

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[362] *John Muir Papers,* autobiographical fragment, Reel 50, accession number 08433, TCCMS 167-328, ca. 1913-1914.

[363] Ibid.

[364] W.F. Badè, *The Life and Letters of John Muir*, 126.

[365] Ibid.

> …a poor woman was walking along the side of the field weeping, wiping her eyes on here apron, and crying, "Oh, the frost, the frost, the weary frost. We'll hae na crop this year and we had nane the last. We'll come to poverty. We'll come to poverty"[366]

In contrast with relatively carefree days of botanical study, Muir was struck by the amount of work that settlement of the wilderness required. "… a whole lifetime was usually consumed before anything like an ordinary size farm was brought under perfect cultivation and fitted for the use of reaping and sowing machines" he wrote. Great significance he gave to the word 'consumed'. Muir had already experienced the threat of life consuming toil at his father's farm in Wisconsin; time and life energy burned up in the pursuit of his father's ideology and expectations. "Slaves to the vice of over-industry" he recalled, "…our fierce, over-industrious way of getting the grain from the ground was too closely connected with grave-digging."[367] His observations of the settler's lives in Canada only succeeded in underscoring the feeling that his life's work should be in the pursuit of his own deepest wishes, "…to wander many a long wild fertile mile in the forests and bogs, free as the winds, gathering plants…"[368]

With dollars earned through his labor on the farmsteads, Muir wandered from one log cabin and rough hewn clearing to the next, happily living off the 'large backwoods loaves' baked by kindly farmwives. Most of the people he met in these sparsely settled districts could not comprehend his reason for wandering the woods and viewed his plant press and the explanation of studying plants for the sake of knowledge with incredulity.

> It was with no little difficulty that my object in seeking "These wilds traversed by few" was explained to the sturdy and hospitable lairds of these remote districts. "Botany was a term they had not heard before in use. What did it mean? If told that I was collecting plants, they would desire to know whether it was cabbage plants that I sought, and if so, how could I find cabbage plants in the bush?[369]

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[366] Ibid. 127.

[367] John Muir, "The Story of My Boyhood and Youth" in *EWDB,* 92.

[368] W.F. Badè, *The Life and Letters of John Muir*, 71.

[369] Ibid. 70.

That these settlers found little to redeem the single-minded pursuit of 'botany' is perhaps not surprising. For these hard-working pioneers, economic security was the primary concern, and this equated to acres cleared and plowed, wheat sown and reaped, and the construction of a sound and permanent farmhouse.

> The poverty, hard work, and deadening routine of pioneer farming discouraged efforts to maintain social or cultural standards. Superior educational attainments, certainly, were of little advantage in wringing a livelihood from the soil, while the preservation of the refinements or impediments of "polite society" served only to divert much needed capital from the farm.[370]

While Muir may have wondered at the lack of comprehension of the term 'botany', the reality of life in these widely scattered 'holes in the bush' provided no recourse for the frontier farmer. For these sturdy 'lairds', looking for plants could only be justified if that plant was a cabbage, for cabbages were food and a life necessity. It is little wonder that they viewed the young botanist as an oddity and questioned whether this was a worthwhile pursuit for a young man of obvious strength and moral character. As Canadian social historian, S. D. Clark notes, the ruthless nature of material existence and the struggle for livelihood for the first pioneers squashed not only the refinement of education, but even the most rudimentary practices of religious worship.[371] "The atmosphere—and neighbours—were uncongenial to the religious mystic as they were to the poet."[372]

Clark may have been correct in this depiction of the first settlers who made their way into the thick bush of Upper Canada, but when leisure time eventually became an option in the lives of the settlers, and where knowledge and education were valued, the pursuit of natural history was not only accepted, but encouraged. In the predominantly Protestant pioneer society, the mistrust of what could be taken as a frivolous pursuit was supported by natural theology, where the study of natural science and history provided a way of discerning the God's work, wisdom and creativity in the complexity and beauty of nature. As Canadian historian, Carl Berger describes the interplay between Protestantism and the pursuit of science through natural history, "Natural theology gave to natural history legitimacy and status in Victorian evangelical culture that went beyond practical utility."[373]

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[370] S. D. Clark, "The Backwoods Society of Upper Canada" in *The Developing Canadian Community*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 70.

[371] Ibid. 74.

[372] Ibid. 74.

For Muir, the question of practical utility, of how to be useful in his life and to find a livelihood that also allowed him to follow his deepest wish to explore nature was a recurring refrain. Everything he experienced on this long botanical ramble brought troubling questions to the forefront, and questions that had niggled at him while studying at the University of Wisconsin became increasingly insistent for resolution. Staunch Scots practicality went head to head with his soul hunger for a deeper experience in nature - for a long intimate bath in botanical delights and a feast of 'God's beauty bread.' Muir's first semester in the 'University of the Wilderness' heightened his feelings of unrest and searching. What was the right course for his life to follow? Why did he feel as if he was somehow out of step with the expectations of society? He felt out of step because, at that time, he had not yet encountered, or found sympathy to the study of natural history in Canada. His gathering sense of restlessness and unease with the settler's single-minded drive to slash, cut and clear without a thought to beauty lost perplexed and troubled his thought. Later, in a letter Muir wrote to his friend, Jeanne Carr, he described this apparent lack of sympathy in the pioneer settlers.

> "A primrose by the river's brim,
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And nothing more."[374]

This concern, informed and infused with boyhood experiences and his experiences with Canadian pioneers, would be addressed to a certain degree during his Canadian sojourn and would continue throughout his life as a key element of his personal ecosophy and eventual political and literary activism for preservation. But for now, wandering the backwoods trails of Upper Canada, he wrestled with the questions but was unable to find satisfactory answers. Mingled with these nebulous perplexities were Muir's personal and immediate concerns in choosing the right vocational path and to live a proper Christian life.

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[373] Carl Berger, *Science, God and Nature in Victorian Canada,* 32.

[374] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Jeanne Carr, Trout Mills near Meaford, Canada, Sept. 13th, 1865.

Perhaps in an effort to delineate what constitutes a good life properly lived, Muir had written to his younger brother Dan in December, 1863, shortly before his foray into the Canadian wilderness, describing what he felt would be the best life path to follow. Although written to Dan, one cannot but wonder if this list of rather conventional attributes were not also the creed that Muir himself was attempting to follow in his own way.

> Set your mark high Dan – no person who was contented to live in ignorance has ever accomplished much in the work of Christian benevolence. To what end do we receive life and health from God if not to do good and be good. Be careful of your health – Dan – guard it as a thing from God's own hand. Study habits of economy and tidiness. Think no task too insignificant or irksome to claim your attention if it may increase your power of usefulness. Wherever your lott [sic] is cast "There's a friend that's ever near" and I am glad that you enjoy his presence.[375]

Even the hard working, pious Canadian pioneers would not dispute this accounting of right-living; however, Muir attempted to adapt this brotherly advice to his own growing need to immerse himself in wild nature. Following the argument of natural theology, botany was the vehicle of learning, thus botanical study fought ignorance and was therefore a work of Christian benevolence. Health, economy, tidiness and usefulness may have been central to Muir's Protestant upbringing, but were then adapted to his personal quest for direction, meaning and the divine in wild nature. No task was too insignificant or irksome if it increased his usefulness in the work set before him. Especially if that work entailed assuaging the restless 'soul hunger' and seeking a life path integrated with his deepest wishes and dreams. Muir's assurance to his brother "There's a friend that's ever near" highlights his profound belief that God was a constant spiritually supportive presence wherever they chanced to be. Meant to be reassuring to his younger brother, the belief also became a critical aspect of spiritual reassurance for Muir during his first long excursion into the Canadian wilds.

Muir wavered between his own interpretation of doing good and being good with the social and religious expectations of his family, his friends and the context of life in 19th century Upper Canada. Through all the self-questioning and fielding of queries from backwoods pioneers, Muir remained committed to his botanical quest. For the time being he would let the questions lay unanswered, his interest remained fixed in botany and lessons learned in the leafy ways of wild forest, bog and meadow.

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[375] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Dan Muir, Old Fountain Lake, Dec. 20th, 1863.

Botany become a passion for Muir. Introduced to botanical science by a fellow student at the University of Wisconsin, Muir grew increasingly enthusiastic with study and personal discovery. Ecstatic with the beauty of each leaf whorl and flower heart, Muir found in botany a perfect portal to greater understanding and experience in and of the divine in nature. "My eyes were opened to their inner beauty, all alike revealing glorious traces of the thoughts of God, and leading one on and on into the infinite cosmos."[376] Botany became his first love; all other interests paled in comparison. While his earlier fascination with mechanics and exceptional gifts of invention initially drew him towards practical 'useful' work, the whir of machinery could not vie with the shy blossoms of the forest and meadow. In the first months of Muir's Canadian sojourn, plant life in all its diversity and beauty secured Muir's complete attention and affection.

Muir's focus on botany took him through many a 'long wild mile' during his Canadian wanders. Not content to remain on the traveled roadways, he set with compass a generally rambling, crooked course through untrammeled forests, picking through swamps, wading streams and swatting mosquitoes. Muir's herbarium shows a wide range of plant specimens gathered in a myriad of locations. He gathered buttercups, meadow rue and white thorn in June. In July, choke-cherry from a garden, agrimony and tree club moss captivated his interest. The subtle beauty of grasses piqued his curiousity mid-summer, and he pressed wild water fox-tail, spear grass, rough meadow grass and meadow redtop. Grasses continued to beguile him as he wandered to the border of a "Great Canada swamp" on July 26th, pressing a specimen of Sweet Reed Grass. On August 13th, he found the favorite of Linneaus, the dainty pink bells of Twin Flower nodding atop a dry mound in a tamarack swamp.[377]

By September, Muir fell under the thrall of ferns. The gorgeous plumy sprays with their delicate richness drew him along shady forest floors and onto rocky-outcrops.[378] New York fern, Lady fern, Shield fern, Interrupted fern and Sensitive fern graced his bulging herbarium. Bladder fern, Ostrich Fern,

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[376] John Muir, "The Story of My Boyhood and Youth", in *EWDB,* 110.

[377] All botanical specimens of John Muir's 1864 Herbarium, including dates and place-names (where available) are found in the Container List – Archival and Manuscript Collections, National Parks Service, John Muir National Historic Site, Martinez, CA. Names are given as Muir has noted them.

[378] I was fortunate to have the opportunity of seeing many of the ferns of the Grey-Bruce region of southern Ontario during a natural history tour with fern expert, Nels Maher and his wife Jeanne. The grace, beauty and astounding diversity of these plants is fascinating. Muir's interest in ferns continued throughout his stay in Upper Canada.

Triangular Polypod and Rattlesnake Fern likely added further interest to the wandering botanist. Mosses and ferns, louseworts and grasses - Muir delved into the obscure and generally less known plants of the forest. The loveliness of flowers sweetened his path, but his scientific interest in the common-place plants as well as the rare and obscure added the enjoyment of discovery with every step he took.

The exhilaration of finding new species that he had never seen before and the sheer freedom to wander at will still cast its spell fifty years later. Recalling the trees of Canada, Muir remembers "rejoicing in their bound[less] wealth and strength and beauty."[379] He collected specimens from many trees, from Red Oak to Black Maple, Chestnut and Balsam Poplar. He climbed the trees to study the harvests of cones, "revelling [sic] in their flowers and fruit like bees in beds of goldenrods." The quality of Muir's memory of this period sings of a joyous abandon to the lessons of nature and experience rich in natural spirituality.

Entering a lowland region near the townships of Amaranth, Luther or Arthur, Muir described the landscape as cedar and tamarack swamps mixed with beaver meadows. For seven and a half hours he was immersed in "one of these solitudes extraordinary."[380] A precise measurement of time, noted over forty-five years later indicates that Muir remembered this particular swamp experience with significant clarity.[381] Muir then describes a central idea within his evolving natural philosophy - a dualism he saw as inherent within the swamp, qualities appearing in opposition but working dynamically towards an essentially harmonious whole. "Land and water" he notes, "life and death, beauty and deformity, seemed here to have disputed empire and all shared equally at last"[382] However, Muir immediately follows with a more personal and emotional reaction to his swamp experience, and notwithstanding his intuitive grasp of the natural order and wholeness of the swamp, he is fraught with a palatable fear.

> I shall not soon forget the chaos of fallen trees in all stages of decay and the tangled branches of the white cedars through which I had to force my way; nor the feeling with which I observed the

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[379] W.F. Badè, *The Life and Letters of John Muir*, 70.

[380] Ibid. 118.

[381] Muir worked on the draft manuscript for the second volume of his autobiography between 1910 and 1914, and thus looks back upon his Canadian stay with all the experience and knowledge gained during the intervening years. This creates a problem in ascertaining his immediate response to the experiences at that time. Without field journals, however, the autobiographical fragments, along with surviving letters, are all that we have to determine the significance of Muir's Canadian period. The precision of some of the accounts helps to support the relative importance of what he actually experienced at the time.

[382] Ibid.

> sun wheeling to the West while yet above, beneath, and around all was silence and the seemingly endless harvest of swamp.[383]

What is most telling about this passage is Muir's choice of words in depicting his own emotional reaction to wading more or less rudderless in this great Canadian swamp. Chaos, decay, tangled, force, silence, endless; all speak of a negative experience; a situation of fear. This is punctuated by Muir's final sentence regarding this particular experience, when, after fighting his way through the swamp vegetation he finally emerges near a farmstead.

> Above all I will not soon forget the kindness shown me by an Irish lady on my emerging from this shadow of death near her dwelling.[384]

The swamp as a 'shadow of death' clearly speaks to a dichotomy within Muir's view of this experience. The biblical overtones are undeniable, having emerged from the 'shadow of death' he need not fear evil. The swamp experience is seen as evil, and wilderness, as Nash describes, was viewed by early pioneers as "at best indifferent, frequently dangerous, and always beyond control."[385] That Muir wrote of this experience in such a light, so late in life, speaks to the power of the actual experience of the young wandering botanist. Much like primitive man, safety, security and a happy existence depended, at least in this instance, on emerging and progressing out of the wilderness.[386] How could Muir, in this one illuminating passage, have been so far from his legendary trust and respect of Nature?

Muir's Canadian swamp experience is critical in illustrating how Muir was essentially in a transitional exploratory stage regarding his personal natural philosophy. How he dealt with the lessons of his father's religion and his own emerging doubts regarding those teachings; his bridging between what society expected 'all good boy's' to do and what his heart's wish really was; his questioning of society's view of nature as strictly commodity rather than also having inherent value in and of itself all coalesced into a confusing, perplexing period in Muir's life. This internal struggle was manifested in the dichotomy of his Canadian experiences – the need for immersion in nature vied with the need for human contact, the fear of the swamp experience vied with the "fresh cool beauty and charm of bog and meadow", and the avocation of botanist vied with an exceptional and practical gift for mechanical invention. Through it all, however, Muir moved towards an ecocentric perspective, only to be occasionally reined in by ingrained socially 'acceptable' expectations and worldviews. Muir's swamp experience, itself a dichotomy of fear and loneliness on one hand and revelation at the dynamic processes of nature on the other indicates Muir's internal turmoil with seemingly opposite inclinations. Muir's gains towards his own natural philosophy however, were profound, and with each experience and reflection, he moved closer to realizing the foundational ecocentric perspective of his mature worldview.

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[383] Ibid.

[384] Ibid.

[385] Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 9.

[386] Ibid, 9.

Calypso

Through May and early June 1864, Muir picked a meandering route through Simcoe County. Each day provided challenges as he forded streams primed with snow-melt and threaded through networks of swamp and forest. After entering an extensive wetland complex of bog and swamp scattered with tamarack and arbor-vitae, Muir soon found his route becoming exceedingly difficult. Describing his situation as "…struggling through tangled drooping branches and over and under broad heaps of fallen tree" Muir grew distressed at the prospect of spending a night in what he called a 'monkeys' nest' atop a pile of deadfall or in a tree. Faint from hunger, discouraged by the prospect of a lonely precarious night and bewildered by the seeming endlessness of the swamp, Muir was at low ebb physically and emotionally.

During this first wilderness venture, it is worth noting that Muir had not as yet matured into the hardened mountaineer who regretted having to emerge from his wilderness haunts for the necessity of bread.[387] Here he had just turned twenty-six, and although used to hard work and privation, had only one three-week botanical ramble in Wisconsin and Iowa as prior wilderness experience. Far from the safety of friends and family and hard-pressed to deal with his own uneasiness in traversing an inhospitable landscape, Muir was for the most part reliant upon his own resources and abilities. During this difficult spring day, a sense of dislocation, of loneliness and an inability to find solace within nature is apparent in his autobiographical reminiscences. He uses words with negative connotations, "struggling", "fear",

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[387] John Muir, "My First Summer in the Sierra" in *EWDB*, 225. Later, Muir would often lament the necessity of having to return to 'civilization' for food supplies, remarking "Gladly, if I could, I would live forever on pine buds, however full of turpentine and pitch, for the sake of this grand independence."

"bewildering" and "discouraging", all underscoring a deep unease and none of Muir's later and celebrated conception of an all loving nature.[388]

In the deep gloaming of the uncompromising swampland, amid fear of the gathering night, physical exhaustion and loneliness, Muir makes his way along an icy stream, and finds growing in a bed of yellow moss, the exquisite northern orchid, Calypso Borealis.[389] "The flower was white and made the impression of the utmost simple purity like a snowflower…It seemed the most spiritual of all the flower people I had ever met. I sat down beside it and fairly cried with joy."[390] According to his autobiographical notes, Muir looks back on the event as being of key importance, "This Calypso meeting happened some forty-five years ago, and it was more memorable and impressive than any of my meetings with human beings excepting, perhaps Emerson and one or two others".[391] Supported by Muir's own recollection, many have viewed this meeting as a pivotal spiritual event in Muir's life, some seeing it as the earliest confirmation of his mature wilderness philosophy, or as a spiritual affirmation of natural Christian theology.[392] The Calypso event is also too often related as the sum total of Muir's Canadian experience, a rather simplistic view of a two-year hiatus that encompassed a complex and important period in his life. The Calypso experience was important, but as we shall see by the end of this chapter, not the complete definition of Muir's Canadian experience.

The story of Muir and the Calypso orchid has only recently been thoroughly examined in the context of when it occurred and was first recorded, and how Muir's highly valued friendship with Mrs. Carr influenced the way he related the event.[393] Although I have given a brief accounting of the Calypso experience as part of the chronological narration of Muir's Canadian experiences, Muir's actual recollection of the experience was written over two years later in a letter to his friend and mentor, Jeanne Carr.[394] Muir's recollection is therefore subject to influences and experiences he had between the actual Calypso experience and his later written recollection. As such, I leave the final discussion of the impact of the Calypso experience to that time frame within this narrative.

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[388] W.F. Badè, *The Life and Letters of John Muir*, 71.

[389] Muir notes the species as *Calypso Borealis*, current classification is *Calypso Bulbosa.*

[390] W.F. Badè, *The Life and Letters of John Muir*, 71.

[391] Ibid. 71.

[392] Muir scholars have concentrated on the Calypso experience as the pivotal event of Muir's Canadian years. See Max Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness*, 176; and Stephen Fox, *The American Conservation Movement*, 43-45.

[393] Bonnie Gisel, "Spiritual Intimacy: John Muir and Jeanne C. Carr", in *John Muir in Historical Perspective*, Sally M. Miller, ed., (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1999) and Steven Holmes, *The Young John Muir*, 121-22, 139.

It is perhaps sufficient to say at this point that the Calypso experience apparently provided Muir a sign of the divine in nature, and with it the reassurance and spiritual strength to overcome his fears. As he later recounts in his autobiographical sketch, "Hunger and weariness vanished, and only after the sun was low in the west I [s]plashed on through the swamp, strong and exhilarated as if never more to feel any mortal care."[395] As Muir intimates in his autobiographical sketch, the meeting with Calypso was a spiritual epiphany, a deep realization that all of nature was suffused with one unifying spirit; that divinity was in all and unified by "an essential love, overlying, underlying, pervading all things."[396] If this truly happened in the cold Canadian bog in June, 1864, then the experience marks an important milestone in the formation of Muir's personal mature ecosophy. However, in order to fully address this possibility, the letter to Mrs. Carr relating the Calypso event will be discussed later in this chapter and within the chronological context of Muir's total Canadian experience.

Scotch Settlement - West Guillimbury Township[397]

Muir continued to tramp about the marshes and forest of Simcoe County after his Calypso experience, and perhaps unbeknownst to him, intersected a fascinating aspect of Canadian settlement history in West Guillimbury Township in the Holland Marsh area. It is important to note that Muir made notations on a draft of his autobiographical manuscript that outlined what he wanted to include regarding his stay in

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[394] *John Muir Papers.* This particular letter to Jeanne Carr was written in the fall of 1866 from Indianapolis. Muir departed from Canada in early March 1866.

[395] W.F. Badè, *The Life and Letters of John Muir*, 71.

[396] Muir quoted in Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, 17.

[397] Usage of the word "Scotch" rather than "Scots" or "Scottish" is taken directly from Muir's own use of the word. Muir uses "Scotch" throughout the autobiographical reminiscences of his Canadian period.

Canada, and emphasized "…Highlanders etc[.] near Bradford…"[398] The Highlanders that Muir refers to near Bradford formed the Scotch Settlement, a frontier community with a fascinating history, and today designated as a National Historic Site.

The "Scotch Settlement" in West Guillimbury originated from a group of immigrants from the north of Scotland.[399] For many of these settlers the road to West Guillimbury had been a long a difficult one, and tied to a particularly interesting segment of early Canadian frontier history – the Red River Settlement established by Lord Douglas, the Fifth Earl of Selkirk in 1811.

During the early 1800's, the North West Company and the Hudson Bay Company were still in competition with each other for the fur trade of the vast regions northwest of the British Colonies. The North West Company was under a competitive disadvantage due to the long and arduous canoe route from Montreal, while the Hudson Bay Company, from their position at Fort Churchill and York Fort on Hudson Bay, had a far shorter access into the rich fur trading regions.[400] In the midst of the increasing tension between the two companies, Lord Selkirk obtained from the Hudson Bay Company a massive land grant around and including the Red River Valley for the purposes of agricultural settlement. Fully 300,000 square kilometres of territory, which Selkirk named Assiniboia, the grant encompassed an area five times larger than Scotland.[401] The Selkirk grant created great concern with the North West Company. Fearing the Red River Settlement would cut off the provisioning for their fur trading posts in the vast interior, the North West Company protested the establishment of the agricultural colony.

In the fall of 1811, the first Selkirk settlers arrived and began the first rough settlement near the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers.[402] The first colonists were dispossessed tenant farmers from the northern Highlands of Scotland, willing to immigrate for a new life and their own land.[403] The first two years were exceedingly difficult for the settlers; starvation and sickness were constant spectres. Without the assistance of the Métis and the North West fur traders living in the area, the settlers would not have survived the first harsh years in the Red River colony. In spite of the help afforded the settlers by the Metis and the North West traders, in early 1814 the governor of the colony issued a 'pemmican proclamation', restricting the export of pemmican out of Red River, thereby limiting a crucial food supply for the North West Company traders.[404] To the North West Company, the proclamation confirmed their fear that the settlement was created to cut off their supply and trading routes to the vast northwestern fur trading regions. In retaliation, the North West Company approached the settlers, offering them transport to Upper Canada and assurances for better land. In 1815, over half of the two hundred settlers agreed to leave the colony. After the main exodus of settlers, the North West Company arrested the governor, forced the remaining settlers to leave, and burned the settlement to the ground.[405]

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[398] *John Muir Papers,* Series III C, Reel 45, accession number 08428.

[399] Andrew F. Hunter, "A History of Simcoe County", (Barrie, Ontario: County Council, 1909), originally published in the Barrie Examiner, Ontario 24, 1889 – February 5, 1891.

[400] R. Douglas Francis, Richard Jones, Donald Smith, *Origins: Canadian History to Confederation,* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada Ltd., 1988), 346.

[401] Ibid. 349.

[402] Ibid. 350. The settlement was established at the site of present day downtown Winnipeg, Manitoba.

[403] Andrew F. Hunter, "A History of Simcoe County – West Guillumbury", 20-21.

Among the party of colonists who returned to Upper Canada were six Sutherland men, four McKays, John ("Red") Matthewson, John ("Black") Matthewson, two McBeths, Arthur Campbell, and George Bannerman.[406] The fleeing settlers, many with families, made their way with great difficulty overland, eventually arriving at Fort William (near present day Thunder Bay) on the northwest shore of Lake Superior. With the aid of the North West Company they were transported by boat to the outlet of the Nottawasaga River on Georgian Bay, and from here made their way south to the settlements along Yonge Street, just north of York, present day Toronto. Approximately three years later, many of them moved into an area along the Holland River near present day Bradford, effectively creating the "Scotch Settlement."[407]

The Scotch Settlement was in keeping with government policy of the day, where early townships were assigned to ethnic or religious social groups, including Catholic Highlanders, Scottish Presbyterians,

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[404] Ibid. 350. Made of dried and pounded buffalo meat, suet, salt and berries, pemmican was a staple food on the frontier. Once dried, pemmican lasted forever; boiled, it provided a very high energy food. See also Loris Russell, *Everyday Life in Colonial Canada,* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1973), 85-6.

[405] Francis, R. Douglas, Richard Jones, Donald B. Smith, *Origins: Canadian History to Confederation,* 350.

[406] Andrew F. Hunter, "A History of Simcoe – West Guillumbury", "(Barrie, Ontario: County Council, 1909), originally published in the Barrie Examiner, Ontario 24, 1889 – February 5, 1891.

[407] The "Scotch Settlement" is presently the Scotch Settlement Historic Site, administered by the Scotch Settlement Historical Society near Bradford, Ontario.

German Lutherans, Irish, British loyalists, and disbanded soldiers.[408] Politically, such assignments encouraged the settlement of the interior regions, and some, such as disbanded regiment of Scottish Highlanders, were assigned land in key defensive regions to discourage American 'liberation' tendencies.[409] Further, Highland Scots immigrants brought with them the traditional close ties of the clan system, which enabled them to weather the difficulties of pioneer social conditions.[410] The extension of the close-knit clan system provided aid on both a group and individual level and when reinforced by the ecclesiastical leadership of either a priest or minister provided a relatively stable introduction to frontier social organization.[411] In keeping with the preponderance of Scottish people in the early settler days in the frontier districts north of York, Muir notes "Among the farmers in the region between Toronto and Georgian Bay I found not a single American. They were Scotch, English, and Irish, mostly Scotch."[412] Welcomed and provided with food and shelter, the loneliness and privation of Muir's first long excursion was offset by the "sturdy and hospitable lairds of these remote districts."[413]

The Campbells

> The Canadian[s] are a truly charitable people; no person in distress is driven with harsh and cruel language from their doors; they not only generously relieve the wants of suffering strangers cast upon their bounty, but they nurse them in sickness, and use every means in their power to procure them employment.[414]

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[408] Louis Gentilcore, ed., *Ontario: Studies in Canadian Geography*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1872), 27-8.

[409] Ibid, 28.

[410] S.D. Clark, "The Backwoods Society of Upper Canada", *The Developing Canadian Community*, 2nd ed., (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1968), 65-6.

[411] Ibid, 66.

[412] W.F. Badè, *The Life and Letters of John Muir*, 72.

[413] Ibid. 70.

[414] Susanna Moodie, *Roughing it in the Bush*, (London, R. Bentley, 1852), 252- 4. Moodie's work is a Canadian pioneer account of the difficulties and fears that isolation and the quest for survival confronted women in the Canadian wilderness In Moodie's book, however, there also lies a certain romanticizing of the landscape and resonance to the "savage and grand in its primeval beauty." Susanna Moodie quoted in Patricia Jasen, *Wild Things: Nature, Culture and Tourism in Ontario, 1790-1914, 25.*

In June 1864, Muir traversed from the western side of the Simcoe Lowlands with their swamps and moraine knolls into the Simcoe Lake Basin. From the southern tip of Lake Simcoe, a wide valley bordered by moraine hills extends from the southwest through which the Holland River wends, diffusing its slow waters among sedges, cattails and white cedar thickets.[415] Bird life abounds, the fluted notes of red-winged blackbirds and chatter of common yellowthroats vie with the conversations of Canada geese. The marsh fairly hummed with life. Muir would have been in his element, splashing through watery courses choked with lily-pads, skirting clumps of alder and willow and reveling in the beauty of the marsh.

Muir emerged from the marsh on a day in June. Making his way up from the Holland River he comes upon a stone farmhouse presided over by Mrs. Campbell, a warm and generous woman of the Scottish homestead tradition. Writing of his meeting with the hospitable Campbell family, Muir notes, "At one of these Highland Scotch farms I stopped for more than a month, working and botanizing…Here I had a fine interesting time." [416] The family consisted of Mrs. Campbell, her daughter and two grown sons. A penciled note on Muir's draft autobiography suggests the names of the boys, "(Alex and Wil.?) 20 + 25 yr of age, wise also very kind"[417]

Inquiries into the Campbell family history have confirmed that Mrs. Campbell's maiden name was Catherine Sutherland, and that she was born in Scotland around 1801 and emigrated with her family as part of Lord Selkirk's colonization plan at the Red River colony.[418] At the time of the Red River uprising, young Catherine would have been 15 or 16 years of age. A young Scot, Arthur Campbell, (born 1796) was also a settler at the Red River colony, and participated in the uprising and subsequent exodus to Upper Canada. Catherine Sutherland married Arthur Campbell on November 8th, 1821 in Fort Douglas, Rupert's Land.[419] Along with many of the Scots settlers who fled the Red River colony, Catherine and Arthur

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[415] L.J Chapman and D.F. Putman, *The Physiography of Southern Ontario*, 304.

[416] W.F. Badè, *The Life and Letters of John Muir*, 72.

[417] *John Muir Papers,* Reel 50, accession number 08432, 171. A letter from a Mr. Sibley, apparently an acquaintance of Muir's from his Canadian years, also mentions the Campbell boys. Mr. Sibley used the initials 'D. and A. Campbell' in reference to the Campbell boys.

[418] Personal conversation with Anne and Tom Campbell of Newmarket, Ontario. January 29, 2003. Mr. T. Campbell is a descendent of Catherine and Arthur Campbell.

[419] Ibid.

Campbell eventually homesteaded at the Scotch Settlement, a short distance from Bradford. Here they built a farm near the Holland Marsh and raised their family. Infant and child mortality was an unfortunate reality of frontier life, and the Campbells lost several children. Their surviving children, Daniel, born in 1837, Catherine born in 1840, and Alexander born in 1842, remained on the family farm well into their twenties. Similar to Muir, who remained on his family's farm until the age of 22, adult children often stayed on the family farm to help with the work and provide company and support for aging parents. In the case of the Campbell family, all three adult children were still in residence at the homestead when John Muir came to live with them in 1864. Arthur Campbell passed away in 1851, which explains why Muir does not mention a Mr. Campbell in his autobiographical notes. Perhaps in reference to the Campbell family, Muir wrote "Most of the old folks, by the time of my visit, had gone to rest in their graves, and the farms they had so laboriously cleared were in the possession of their children, who were living in good brick houses in comparative affluence and ease."[420]

The Campbell family offered hospitality, kindness and good humor. Upon seeing the ragged young man on her doorstep asking for bread, Mrs. Campbell swept John in with the rest of her family, extending motherly care and concern to the wandering botanist. John had not been feeling well, privation and prolonged physical exertion having sapped his natural reserves of health and strength. Feeling greatly welcomed by the family, "Mrs. Campbell could hardly have been kinder had I been her own son…"[421] Muir stayed at the farm well into July, doing chores and taking the occasional ramble in the Holland marsh to collect plants and rebuild his health.

The time John Muir spent with the Campbell family was a reassuring mixture of family warmth, solid food, rest, and light work, all spiced with the irrepressible high spirits of the Campbell boys. The 'boys' were close enough in age to Muir to have no compunction for playing tricks at the expense of their guest; their devilish sense of humor and propensity for practical jokes Muir weathered with somewhat rueful appreciation. At the time of Muir's stay, Daniel would have been 27, only a year older than Muir, Catherine was 24 and Alexander 22. Watching their guest head for the woods and marshes in the early hours of the morning, they came up with the nickname "Botany", a moniker that stuck for the duration of Muir's stay.

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[420] Badè. W.F., *The Life and Letters of John Muir,* 72.

[421] Ibid. 72.

In his autobiographical notes, Muir recounts several humorous episodes instigated by the Campbell brothers, one of which affected him directly. At that time, British Army deserters were known to hide in the thickets and marshy overgrowth of the Holland swamp. The Campbells were aware that a reward had been posted for one particularly elusive fugitive, and notified British officers that they "…had seen a suspicious character creeping out of the woods and swamps of the Holland River early in the morning…"[422] This notice prompted a watch and the subsequent capture of a bewildered Muir. Wryly, Muir later recounted, "I had some difficulty in explaining that I was only a botanist."[423]

After staying over a month with the Campbell family, 'Botany' was eager to continue his studies. Thanking the kind family, he chose a wandering path westward through the still largely forested districts interspersed with the odd rough clearing and homestead. From place notes in his herbarium, Muir followed a route that eventually took him to an area near Hamilton Bay, just north of Lake Ontario. He wandered there for the month of July, through meadows and marshes, along the border of a swamp and through shady low woods. In August, he was still collecting, pressing and noting plant species as he walked from a mountain near Burlington Bay around the southern shore of Lake Ontario to eventually arrive in the Niagara Falls environs. Here he spent time meandering along the southern shore of Lake Ontario, waiting the arrival of his younger brother, Dan.

All through the summer, he continued his usual mode of living, botanizing along the trails and roadways, stopping for food at farmsteads, working the occasional odd job to pay for his food and shelter. Having access to commerce and trade through shipping, the region along the shores of Lake Ontario and Niagara Peninsula sported the densest populations by the mid 1800's.[424] The area was well settled by 1864, the thriving lake-side communities supporting a gradual expansion of settlement northwards into the interior districts. When Muir wandered through this area, he would not have had much difficulty in finding occasional work to pay for his board. While this region did not provide as much of untouched wild forest wilderness as the frontier districts west of West Guillimbury, it did present at least one challenging experience for the young botanist.

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[422] Ibid. 73.

[423] Ibid.

[424] R.L. Gentilcore, ed., *Ontario: Studies in Canadian Geography*, 28.

Wolf forest

Muir's ambivalence towards wolves is marked by his late autobiographical recollection of a late night encounter with a wolf-pack near Niagara Falls. A notation "wolf forest" in Muir's herbarium places him somewhere in the vicinity of Niagara Falls in early September 1864. In an autobiographical fragment, he recalls the experience as a savage imposition on the peace of the Canadian wilderness.[425]

> Only once in these long Canada wanderings was the deep peace of the wilderness savagely broken. It happened in the maple woods about midnight when I was cold and my fire was low. I was awakened by the awfully dismal wolf-howling and got up in haste to replenish the fire. Some of the wolves around me seemed very near, judging by their long-drawn-out howling, while others were replying farther and farther away; but the nearest of all was much nearer than I was aware of, for when I had succeeded in producing a blaze that lighted up the bushes around me, and was in the act of stooping to pick up a branch to add to the blaze, a large gray wolf that had been standing within less than ten feet of me rushed past so startlingly near that I threw the limb at the wolf. This put an end to sleep for that night. I watched and listened and kept up a good far-reaching blaze, which perhaps helped to keep them at bay. Anyhow I saw no more of them, although they continued their howling conversation until near daylight.[426]

While the autobiographical notes are taken from the Pelican Bay Manuscript and reworked within the last two years of Muir's life, he does not change the basic elements of this event, suggesting that the recollection was clear and didn't require elaboration. What remains interesting is how Muir's memory of this experience compares with his later testimony to the rights of all living things, including predators, in the grand plan and process of nature.

By 1867, during the thousand-mile walk to the Gulf of Mexico, Muir anticipated certain aspects of Leopold's land ethic, writing of the natural and rightful place that predators had in the divine order of nature. Alligators are "beautiful in the eyes of God. They, also, are his children, for He hears their cries, cares for them tenderly, and provides their daily bread."[427] Bears he admired and respected, calling them

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[425] *John Muir Papers*, Series III C, Autobiographical fragment, Reel 50, accession number 08433, ca. 1913-1914. Originally dictated as part of the Pelican Bay Manuscript, the essence of the wolf story remained the same in subsequent revisions.

[426] W.F. Badè, *Life and Letters of John Muir*, 71-2.

[427] John Muir, "A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf", in *EWDB,* 148.

"the sequoia of the animals", coyotes are "beautiful animals, graceful in motion."[428] In contrast to this open acceptance of the intrinsic value and unique characters of these predators, Muir's depiction of wolves remains curiously ambivalent. Muir neither condemns wolves as dangerous vermin nor openly views them as integral to the divine in nature. There is no cautious respect or admiration for the wolves as there is in his meeting with Yosemite bears, where a "big, burly cinnamon bear…made a fine picture" and a grizzly "…turning his head, caught sight of mine, stared sharply a minute or two, and then, with fine dignity, disappeared in a manzanita-covered earthquake talus."[429]

For wolves Muir harbored a deep uneasiness, if not fear. Was this reaction born from his late night encounter with the wolf pack in Upper Canada? Perhaps, but whatever the source of Muir's uneasy feelings towards this particular predator, he held them throughout his life. At the age of fifty-two, bivouacking on Muir Glacier in Alaska, Muir heard the howling of wolves and noted their advancement to within a quarter mile of his position. "I began to fear they had a mind to attack me, and I made haste to the shelter of a big square boulder, where, though I had no gun, I might be able to defend myself from a front attack with my alpenstock."[430] Muir was not a man easily unnerved, which makes his fear and defensive reaction in this situation noteworthy. Perhaps Muir's first encounter with wolves in the summer of 1864 made such an indelible impression that the fear of being alone, in the dark, facing the unknown amid a pack of wolves could not be tempered with extensions of kinship and intrinsic value. There are certain aspects in nature that are simply too elemental, they simply exist, and we simply experience through visceral awareness and instinctive response. Muir could not relate the wolf-pack encounter in any other way; it was a raw, primal experience during his first long-term wilderness excursion and remained that way for the rest of his life.

A Winter Den

On February 28th, 1862, John Muir's younger brother, Daniel left the family home for Canada.[431] Like

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[428] Lisa Mighetto, ed., *Muir Among the Animals: The Wildlife Writings of John Muir*, (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1986), 161, 176.

[429] John Muir, "Our National Parks", in *EWDB*, 529-30.

[430] John Muir, "Travels in Alaska", in *EWDB*, 854.

[431] *John Muir Papers*, Letter from Anne Gilrye Muir to John Muir, March 1, 1862.

John before him, Daniel received no advice or financial help from his father. Although not stating the reason for Daniel's leave-taking, Anne Muir alludes to why her youngest son had taken the rather drastic step of departing for another country. "I try to think it is for the best. You will have heard of this new conscription law exempting none, it seems hard"[432] In Canada West Daniel managed to continue his schooling, but in the winter of 1863, he was forced to leave due to lack of funds. Writing to Dan in December 1863, John Muir is encouraging and offers to send "a few Yankee greenbacks" to help with the "dearth of dimes."[433] Although no record exists of correspondence from John to Daniel after December 1863 until May 1866, it is probable that correspondence between them, or through the family in Wisconsin kept the brothers in touch with each other after John Muir entered Canada.

According to the recollections of both William H. Trout and Peter L. Trout, at some point during the summer Muir's younger brother Daniel joined him on his botanical excursion.[434] Together, the brothers spent part of the summer wandering through the frontier districts botanizing. For John Muir, having the company of his brother banished loneliness and provided a greater sense of security. It is interesting that in his autobiographical notes Muir does not mention having Dan with him until their rendezvous at Niagara Falls in early September. Whatever the reason for this omission, both Trout brothers mention that John and Daniel botanized together for part of the summer, parting at some point for an undisclosed reason but fully intending to rejoin at an agreed upon location.[435]

During the period after the brothers had temporarily parted, Daniel apparently walked to the village of Meaford from Owen Sound, looking for work to replenish his meager finances.[436] Unsuccessful in finding work in Meaford, he was directed to the Trout & Jay Company, a sawmill and harvest tool manufacturing enterprise on the Bighead River. Finding the mill site in a secluded dell upstream from Meaford, Dan met William H. Trout, the mill overseer, and his younger brother Peter. While initially unable to offer employment, Dan's charming boyish countenance and friendly personality eventually won him a job for room and board and one dollar a week. Working at the Trout & Jay mill for approximately 6 weeks, Dan soon became "not a needy young tramp, but a most welcome and companionable guest."[437]

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[432] Ibid.

[433] *John Muir Papers*, Letter from John Muir to Daniel Muir, Old Fountain Lake, Dec. 20th, 1863.

[434] W.H. Trout, Trout Family History, 121, and P. L. Trout, "What I Know About John Muir", (unpublished manuscript), 4. Original manuscript in possession of Scott Cameron, Canadian Friends of John Muir, Meaford, Ontario.

[435] Ibid.

[436] P. L. Trout, "What I Know About John Muir", 4.

At some point, through direct correspondence or messages forwarded through their home in Wisconsin, the brothers agreed to meet each other at Niagara Falls in September. In choosing to meet at Niagara, the Muir brothers became active participants in a well-established tourism industry focused on Niagara Falls.[438] Drawn by the sensibility of the romantic period, which imbued wild nature with both the sublime and picturesque, people traveled to Niagara Falls to experience its symbolic power as a New World icon - primitive, dangerous and full of the mystery of the North American wilderness.[439] The romantic sense of the sublime – that of awe and mystery and elevation into a transport, was experienced by the Muir brothers during their first, and subsequent visits to the falls. Writing to his young sister, Annie, John described their experience at Niagara Falls.

> You know that Mary said that the locomotive made a terrible fizzing – well, the Falls make a terrible [s]plashing. The water in our lake would not last it half a second. When Dan and I first saw them their enormous magnitude and grandeur so stunned and overwhelmed us that we could not realize anything, but when we had retired to the hills and returned several times we began more and more to see and feel that we indeed stood before the great Niagara, the grandest sight in the world.[440]

Interestingly, this was the only reference made to Niagara Falls in Muir's extent writings, including his autobiographical notes. The omission of Niagara Falls from Muir's later autobiographical manuscripts perhaps reflects his later ambivalence towards what he called the 'scenery habit'; the quest for the stupendous spectacle that obliterates the near and more personal view of nature in all its immediate, unpretentious, but no less powerful beauty. At the time, however, Muir saw Niagara as a grand spectacle, sufficient to pull him back for several visits to see this 'grandest sight', thereby including him and his brother as willing participants in the nascent tourism industry of Upper Canada.

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[437] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History*, 121.

[438] Patricia Jasen, *Nature, Culture and Tourism in Ontario: 1790–1914,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 29-30.

[439] Ibid. 30.

[440] *John Muir Papers*, Letter from John Muir to Annie Muir, from Meaford, October 23, 1864.

With the Canadian winter on the horizon, the brothers discussed where they should go to find shelter and work through the long cold months. As William H. Trout recollects, the discussion between the two brothers over where to spend the winter eventually came down to the Trout & Jay mill in Meaford.

> It would be much like a winter den as they could find, and though the place was not our family home, yet a good part of it would be there;...and we had a large shop in which they could likely have employment, or they could work in the woods getting out logs for the mill.[441]

John agreed with the idea, and in late September or early October, the brothers made their way north to Meaford on Georgian Bay, hoping to find work, companionship and a secure home for the winter. They were not disappointed.

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[441] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History*, 122.

Figure 1. Portrait of John Muir. Madison, Wisconsin, 1863. Photographer unknown.

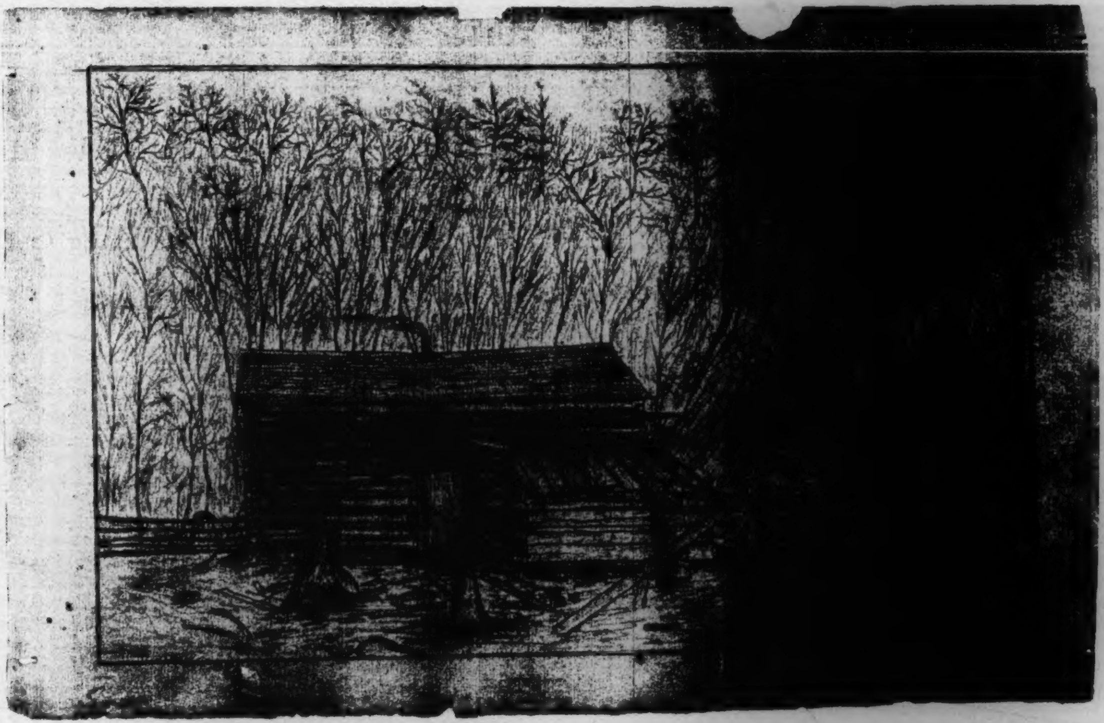

Figure 2. "Mill Hollow – near Meaford." ca 1865. Pencil sketch by John Muir. John Muir Papers, Series IV A 00131 (oversize) image # 329.

Figure 2. Portrait of William Henry Trout, ca. 1865.

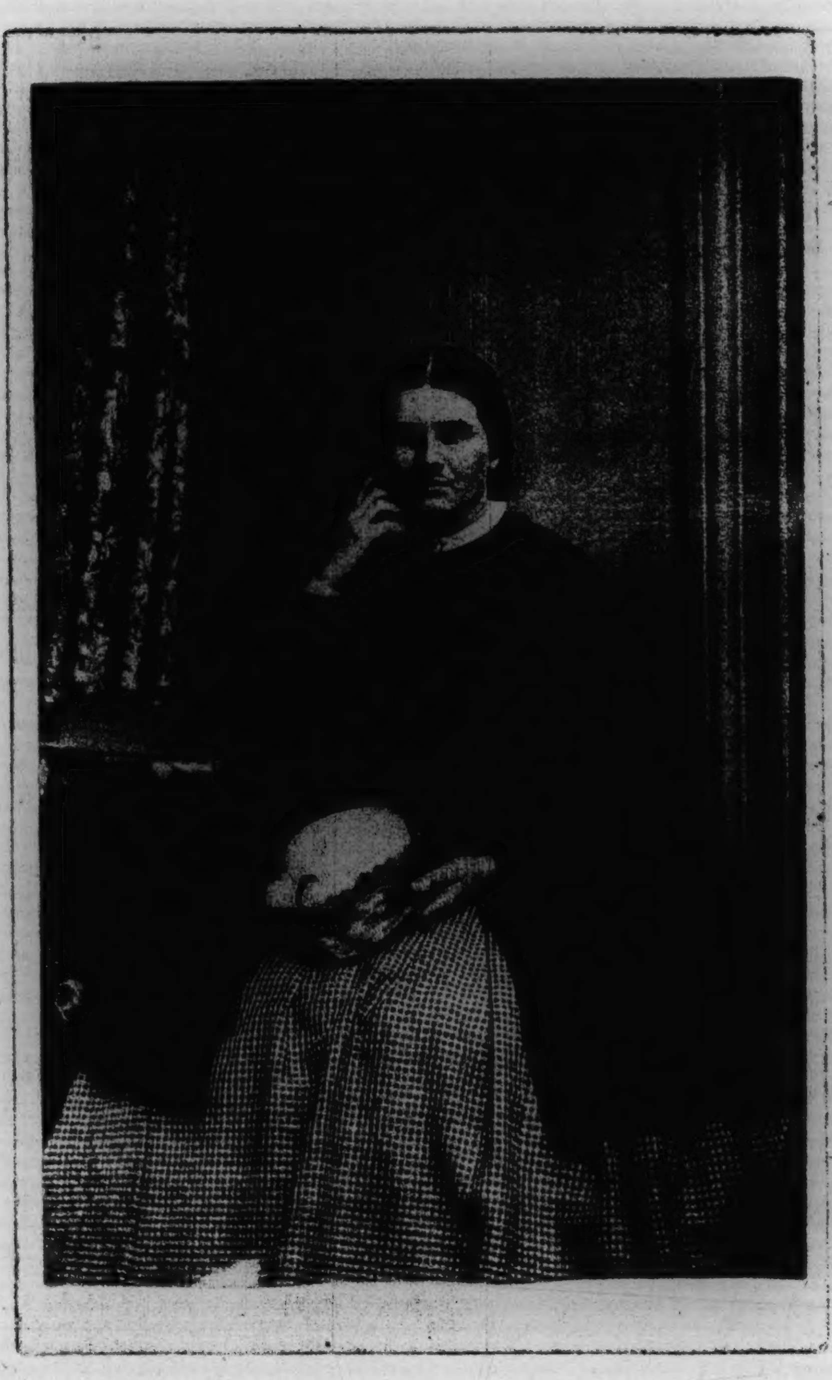

Figure 3. Portrait of Harriet Trout, ca. 1865.

Meaford on Georgian Bay, Canada West

John Muir's Canadian period is defined in no small part by the contextual elements of his experiences. Muir's evolving relationship with wild nature was an important aspect of his Canadian period and as such requires a description of the landscape he lived in, reacted to and learned from while he lived and worked near Meaford on Georgian Bay. It is also important to note that the bulk of Muir's time in Canada West was spent in the company of people. Whether with the farmer-settlers who offered him food and shelter for the night, the Campbell family in West Guillumbury, the Trout family, or the greater community of Meaford, Muir's Canadian sojourn is in part defined by the social context of that time. As will be discussed later in this chapter, John Muir interacted with community of Meaford to some extent. He was aware of community and family dynamics, the social and religious context revolving around the Disciples of Christ in Meaford, and the certain social concerns of the community. While these influences were local in perspective, the mid-Victorian period was an intense period of social and religious reform within Upper Canada, and this ferment distilled down through the local community and became part of the milieu of Muir's Canadian experience.

In order to ascertain the effect that these elements had upon Muir, a discussion of the physical nature of the landscape as well as the social, religious and political elements of the community of Meaford are necessary to provide the context for this portion of his Canadian experience.

The Landscape

The route the Muir brothers took to Meaford from Niagara Falls is not known, although Peter Trout later states that they came by way of Owen Sound.[1] A notation in Muir's Canadian period herbarium places him near Niagara Falls on September 30th, 1864.[2] From this note it is tenable that the two brothers would have arrived in Meaford in early October 1864, but there are no further herbarium notations to provide clues as to their route. Regardless of the route they traveled, John and Daniel Muir would have experienced both pleasure and interest in the Georgian Bay environs.

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[1] Peter L. Trout, "What I Know About John Muir", (unpublished manuscript).

[2] Notations from the John Muir Herbarium, Container List - Archival and Manuscript Collections, John Muir National Historic Site, Martinez, California.

Flowing north from a wide notch in the Niagara Escarpment, the Bighead River flows through a wide forested valley before it enters Georgian Bay at Meaford. The Bighead River is old, its valley-making work finished before the onset of the Wisconsin ice sheet. Surprisingly, the press of the last glacier age did little to erode the contours of the original river valley, but left a legacy of marvelously arranged glacial drift. Approximately 300 drumlins exist in the area, their oval hillock outlines giving the valley the appearance of a "basket of eggs" or a "nest of drumlins."[3] Meltwater from the retreating glaciers formed great freshwater seas, and the shoreline of ancient Lake Algonquin, marked by gravel deposition along the ancient beachhead is found crossing the Bighead Valley over two miles inland from the current shores of Georgian Bay. Moraine remnants, silt deposition from ancient tributaries, shorelines, gravel bars and terraces marking the high water levels of successive glacial lakes combine to create a landscape of subtle and fascinating character.[4]

Did Muir recognize the glacier-making work in the valley? With his studies of landscape formation at the University of Wisconsin with Ezra Carr, Muir certainly had the basic theoretical knowledge of glacier caused landscape formations. However, apart from a late note to include some description of glacial evidence in the Canadian period of his autobiography, there is no other indication that Muir noticed or wrote about the manifestations of glacial work around Meaford. Muir's focus during this period was on botany and he happily found himself in an area richly diverse in plant life.

Landscape character may be carved by glaciers but forests and flowers enrich it. Before settlement, the County of Grey region along the southwestern shore of Georgian Bay was covered in vast tracts of forest. Elm, maple and beech towered on the hills and valleys. The marvelous sculpture of windswept pine and hardy cedar fringed the shores of Georgian Bay. Tamarac and white cedar swamps dotted lowlands, flowers and ferns grew in fresh and wild abundance. A myriad of landforms nurture a diversity of plant communities. From rocky promontories to shady forested headlands, deep sheltered valleys to windswept uplands, plant life thrives in special ecological niches in the Grey-Bruce region. With the accumulated warmth of summer stored in its deep waters, Georgian Bay serves to moderate effects of most severe temperatures, keeping the area cool in the spring but warmer into the fall, effectively extending the local frost-free season.[5] As Grey-Bruce region encompasses a transitional eco-region between the northern boreal and southern hardwood forests, the complexity and profusion of plant life, tucked among unique glacial landforms, make the Grey-Bruce area around Georgian Bay of uncommon interest and beauty.

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[3] L.J. Chapman and D.F. Putnam, *The Physiography of Southern Ontario*, 2d ed., 194.

[4] Ibid. 195.

Although botanical exploration was not the primary reason Muir came to Meaford, he could not have found a more interesting assembly of plant life in Upper Canada than that in the County of Grey and Bruce Peninsula. Renowned botanist for the Geological Survey of Canada, John Macoun collected plants in the region, and in the early 1920's American botanist Professor M. L. Renald became fascinated by the Bruce Peninsula environs, calling it a "place out of time."[6] Daniel's suggestion to over-winter near Meaford was serendipitous on many counts, not the least being that the area provided engrossing options for botanical study.

The Georgian Bay environs shaped the people who settled along the rocky bays and forested hills, creating a living dynamic between the environment and human history, and between the people and the places where they settled and lived out their lives.[7] It also infused the life of John Muir, contributing to the unfolding of his relationship with wild nature. It went beyond the study of botany and natural history, and as will be discussed, it imbued Muir's spiritual and philosophical worldviews.

The Village of Meaford

> Meaford lies very prettily. The lake view in front is at all times exhilarating; the site of town is dry, although not elevated; a beautiful country lies around, sloping toward the town; many handsome cottages adorn the streets at different points, and the public buildings and places of business are very creditable to the taste and enterprise of the inhabitants.[8]
> Notwithstanding their isolated position and the privations endured in consequence, a more cheerful and contented people I never had the good fortune to mingle with.[9]

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[5] Bruce-Grey Plant Committee, Owen Sound Field Naturalists, *The Orchids of Bruce and Grey,* (Owen Sound: Stan Brown Printers Ltd.), 2.

[6] Ibid. 1.

[7] Claire Elizabeth Campbell, *Shaped by the West Wind: Nature and History in Georgian Bay,* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005). Claire Campbell's recent 'history of place' provides an engrossing study of how nature informs and infuses meaning into the local culture of Georgian Bay, and defines the relationship of people to their environment.

[8] W.W. Smith, *Gazetteer & Directory of the County of Grey,* (Globe Stream Press, 1865-66), 153.

[9] A.M. Stephens, "The Early Days of Owen Sound", (Owen Sound?, C.J. Pratt, 1892 ?),14. Original publication – Library of Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa: Canadian Institute of Historical Microreproductions.

The Georgian Bay region was first inhabited by First Nations people. The semi-nomadic Algonquin peoples of the north; the Odawa Ojibwa and Nipissing, and the Wendat, or Huron peoples of the south used the Bay as a water route, and moved through the region on a seasonal basis, fishing, berrying and trading with each other.[10] The water route was also used in times of intertribal warfare, and saw the incursion of the Iroquois north into Ojibway territory in the mid 1600's. The Ojibwa also moved through the Georgian Bay area during the early1700's, using it as a conduit between Lake Ontario and their tribal homeland on the north shore of Lake Superior.[11]

With the advent of European exploration into the region, both the Iroquois and the Ojibwa nations were regarded to be as fierce and wild as the untamed region they lived in, and Georgian Bay came to symbolize the vast untamable northern wilderness, and a perfect hinterland to deposit the troublesome Natives of southern Ontario. By the mid 1800's, reservations for native peoples were established along the east shore and the Bruce Peninsula and Manitoulin Island, basically because these areas, with the exception of Manitoulin, were not prime agricultural land and were not of much use to white settlers.[12]

With the advancement of settlement and the stories of the beauty of the Bay, the role of the Indian in the Georgian Bay region became more of a romantic element within a growing tourism industry around the Great Lakes.[13] By the time that Muir entered Upper Canada, First Nations peoples had been moved north and east, contained for the most part within reservations. Traditional living by hunting and fishing continued within the rocky archipelago of the eastern shore and on the Bruce Peninsula, and by virtue of their relative isolation, the peoples who lived there retained their old ways of thinking and living, even into the 20th century. [14]

John and Daniel Muir arrived in the pretty lakeside village of Meaford on a fall day in 1864.

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[10] Claire Elizabeth Campbell, *Shaped by the West Wind, 25-6.*

[11] Ibid. 97-8.

[12] Ibid. 99.

[13] Patricia Jasen, *Wild Things,* 95-7.

[14] Claire Elizabeth Campbell, *Shaped by the West Wind,*. 101.

By this time, the community had already passed through the early pioneer stages and was well established and functioning as a social and economic centre in the area. With a population of approximately one thousand and growing, the village was following the general population trend of expansion and growth within Upper Canada. From the easily accessible shorelines of the lower Great Lakes, the growing population of Upper Canada gradually extended inland via established railroads and north and west along the shores of Lake Huron and Superior.

A utilitarian focus permeated the first influx of settlement in the Georgian Bay region. Resource extraction, from the early fur trade to forestry, fishing and agriculture, sought primarily to extract commodity for economic gain. The pursuit of science and natural history in the region, as elsewhere in the new frontier, was as much about the finding new possibilities for exploiting resources as it was with the advancement of knowledge.[15] The settlers soon found that their expectations were constrained by an environmental reality of the Georgian Bay region, where inventory and adaptation to environmental constraints formed the bedrock of social and economic realities.[16]

The earliest settlers in St. Vincent Township and the County of Grey were faced with a vast tract of forest dotted with swamps and rocky uplands. The immensity of wilderness to the north appeared unfathomable, so the first line of settlement concentrated on the immediate regions recently surveyed for settlement by the government. Alexander M. Stephens, an early resident of Owen Sound and rather colorful writer, noted the extent of unsettled wilderness.

> The tract of country which the Government intend opening up…(is) large enough for three or four good sized counties, but at present a "howling wilderness." This is by no means a figure of speech, as we were nightly surrounded by bands of wolves which sometimes came so close as to appear desirous of cultivating an all too intimate acquaintance. I cannot exactly say that I was afraid, but somehow or other the sensation was something like that produced by the bagpipes – the further away, the more agreeable the music."[17]

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[15] Carl Berger, *Science, God and Nature,* 3.

[16] Claire Elizabeth Campbell, *Shaped by the West Wind,* 63.

[17] A.M. Stephens, "The Early Days of Owen Sound", 8. While Stephen's experience with wolves is not directly related to Muir's, both accounts underscore the presence of large tracts of unsettled wilderness in Upper Canada.

Many of the first arrivals had moved "from the older settlements, who came, if not with means, at least with Canadian experience, and knew how to make the most of a backwoods township."[18] Many others came seeking a future for themselves after displacement from their small holdings in England, Scotland and Ireland. They arrived by water, rowing their shallow draft batteaux up onto the gravel shores, searching the "Queen's bush" for signs of fertile soil, timber, and running water.[19] The resulting settlement patterns resembled 'holes in the bush' with rough hewn shanties erected as the first pioneer homes. Referring to these difficult early days, Stephens noted that "Five acres of cleared land was considered quite a holding. Trees, often huge in their girth and height, had to be cut"[20]

The Bighead River, running cheerfully from the uplands into the sparkling water of Georgian Bay soon aroused the interest of early pioneers. Trees were abundant and the rushing river water promised power for industrial ventures. Around 1834 an Irish immigrant, David Miller, landed at the mouth of the Bighead River and set up a shanty on lot 15, concession 5, St. Vincent, ostensibly becoming the first landed settler in the area.[21] Mr. Miller built and operated the first grist-mill of the area, using water power from the Bighead River to turn the grindstones. With his friend Charles Todd, William Whitelaw beached his batteaux on the gravel shores near the Bighead the same year, and secured lot 11, concession 5.[22] Close to this time, Alex Londry and his son John also arrived and settled on lot 12, concession 4.[23]

From 1834 on a steady stream of people landed at the little wharf David Miller had erected, named "Peggy's Landing" after his wife, Margaret.[24] Some traveled into St. Vincent township along the Government Road or, as it was locally known, the Old Mail Road. From Barrie, the Old Mail Road wended diagonally through Osprey, Ravenna, Heathcote and Griersville townships before arriving at the fledgling Meaford village.[25] All who came during the early 1830's began the hard but hopeful work of carving out homesteads and settling the township of St. Vincent.

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[18] W.W. Smith, W.W., *Gazetteer & Directory of the County of Grey*, 1865 – 1866.

[19] James H. Rutherford, "Early Navigation on the Georgian Bay", Ontario Historical Society, Papers and Records, Vol. XVIII, (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1920), 14.

[20] A. M. Stephens, "The Early Days of Owen Sound", 27.

[21] E. L. Marsh, *A History of the County of Grey*, (Owen Sound: Fleming Publishing Company, Ltd. 1931), 266.

[22] Ibid. 251.

[23] Ibid. 252.

[24] Ibid. 26.

By 1837, St. Vincent Township was on its way to being settled, the widely scattered clearings and pioneer shanties gradually giving way to developed farmsteads and substantial farm houses. Among the early pioneers who arrived after 1837 were retired British officers, "Squire" William Corley, and Captains Waddell and Workman, who received their military land grants in the area.[26] William Stephenson, originally from Yorkshire, also arrived and constructed the first hotel of the township in the fledgling village at the mouth of the Bighead River, calling it the "Georgian Inn."[27]

In 1841, Stephenson took on the role of postmaster for the St. Vincent Township and worked out of a small office in the Georgian Inn. He kept this position until his death in 1858.[28] The presence of a post office in the township was critical for the new settlers, for it allowed the exchange of business correspondence, personal letters and news from the larger centres of York and Montreal. In these early days, Stephenson walked the entire length of the Old Mail Road on foot, between St. Vincent and Barrie. Eventually he constructed a small wharf capable of providing adequate berth for larger sailing vessels and the small settlement for a short period of time became known as "Stephenson's Landing."[29]

By the early 1840's, St. Vincent township had grown and the population of "Stephenson's Landing" at the mouth of the Bighead River was beginning to expand. The Government of Upper Canada decided to survey and sub-divide the village reserve, which had initially been set aside when St. Vincent Township was surveyed in 1833.[30] This was the beginning of Meaford proper. The name for St. Vincent Township had been selected shortly after it had been surveyed in 1833. The area was originally referred to as "Zero", being the most northerly township thus surveyed, however, Captain Moberly, a retired Naval officer, disliked the name and had it changed to "St. Vincent" in honor of the naval hero, Admiral Jervis, Earl St. Vincent.[31] Upon surveying the village plots in 1845, Government surveyor, W.R. Gibbard, decided to extend the courtesy and chose the name "Meaford" for the village, after "Meaford House", the country seat of the Earl St. Vincent in Staffordshire, England.

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[25] Ibid. 37.

[26] Ibid. 252.

[27] Ibid. 61.

[28] Ibid.

[29] J. M. Kilbourn, "Reminiscences of the First Settlers of Owen Sound," in Papers and Records, Vol. XVIII, (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1920), 7.

[30] E.L. Marsh, *History of the County of Grey*, 62.

As a growing service centre for the surrounding area, Meaford began to attract entrepreneurs and businessmen. The concentration of both labor and capital during the initial years of economic development in the frontier districts of Upper Canada often superceded the establishment of social institutions such as schools, libraries and churches. Many individuals capable of performing specific community enhancing offices were forced by necessity to concentrate on economic exploitation only. As Canadian social historian, S. D. Clark notes,

> The drain of capital into economic enterprise left little for community services while the demand for labour meant that even those who possessed specialized training of some sort were attracted into economic vocations.[32]

As the economy matured, however, and shopkeepers, speculative businessmen and skilled laborers settled into the community, a gradual movement towards more permanent social institutions and amenities occurred.

True to the pattern of social and economic settlement, Meaford primarily concentrated on the establishment of economic development during its early formative years. Between 1845 and 1847, Jesse T. Purdy, D.L. Layton, and C.R. Sing arrived in Meaford and became influential community citizens during the early development days of Meaford and St. Vincent Township. Being a shrewd businessman, Jesse Purdy purchased land and the existing grist mill originally built by David Miller, and subsequently constructed another grist mill and a sawmill on the Bighead River.[33] Cyrus R. Sing also became a very prominent member of Meaford and area, setting up the first carding mill and then a combined saw and woolen mill.[34] David Layton became postmaster upon the death of William Stephenson and became a Councilor for both the township and the village of Meaford.[35]

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[31] W.W. Smith, *Gazetteer & Directory of the County of Grey*, 1865-66, 56.

[32] S.D. Clark, "Social Organization and Changing Structure" in *The Developing Canadian Community*, 4.

[33] E.L. Marsh, *History of the County of Grey*, 62.

In keeping with the social organization of Upper Canada, the growth of service communities such as Meaford attracted entrepreneurs of small service businesses looking for a more settled and respectable way of life.

> Apart from the larger, cities, every town was primarily a market town, dominated by shopkeepers. Such men were typically lower middle class, which meant that to them respectability was all in all. No solid citizen could afford to be caught up in bar-room fights or picked out of the gutter on a Saturday night: his place was with his family in the family pew on Sunday morning.[36]

In the pursuit of respectability and stability, many shopkeepers, entrepreneurs and fledgling industrialists became public-spirited citizens who contributed to the growth and organization of Meaford. Many invested in the future economic development of the community and created much of the synergy needed for the establishment of a thriving service centre.

Speculating that Meaford would eventually expand outside the small area surveyed by government, William Stephenson surveyed and subdivided his land north of the village into town lots. Also on speculation, Jesse Purdy laid out lots south of the townsite, and the resultant small enclave became known as "Purdytown". The pattern of people setting up homes in each of these three distinct areas gave Meaford the appearance of three "embryo villages"[37] Rivalry between "Purdytown" and the village of Meaford ensued for a number of years until the lines of division eventually blurred through community expansion.

In 1848, William Trout, a millwright and carpenter arrived in Meaford to construct a grist-mill for local businessman, Moses Chantler. Seeing the economic and social promise of the young community, William Trout moved his family from Hurontario (now Collingwood) to St. Vincent Township in 1847. The Trout family took up residence on a farm on the north half of lot 22, concession 6, just north of Meaford, and eventually purchased the southern half of the lot in 1855.

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[34] Ibid. 62-63.

[35] Ibid. 63.

[36] A.R.M. Lower, "British North America in the 1860's", *Canada - One Hundred: 1867 – 1967*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1967), 13.

[37] E.L. Marsh, *History of the County of Grey*, 153.

The community of Meaford continued to grow steadily through the 1850's. The 1850's became the most prosperous decade in the history of British North America, due in no small part to the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854, the Crimean War and an escalation of railroad construction.[38] Sawmills, grist mills and woolen mills were all in operation in or near the town. A community milestone was reached in 1851, when under the Municipal Institutions Act, the first council of St. Vincent township was elected with strong representation coming from Meaford. With Jesse Purdy as reeve, William Trout, William Whitelaw, James Grier and David Layton were also elected to create a full contingent of elected representatives.[39] The growth of other settlement communities in the area also had a positive effect upon commerce as markets were shared and goods and services moved between towns.

> The opening of the Owen Sound district was the beginning of a new era to the inhabitants of St. Vincent. It furnished a market for their fish and farm produce, and afforded them the opportunity of obtaining such goods as they required or the circumstances warranted.[40]

On January 1, 1855 the Northern Railroad reached Collingwood, and with the advent of a rail link to Georgian Bay, regular steamer connections between Meaford, Collingwood and Owen Sound further encouraged economic development and an influx of people into Meaford.

> Small settlements grew and found places on the map. The railway touching at one point on the bay made a change in the traffic routes, and instead of the teamed freights which followed the shortest overland routes, cargoes accumulated at the railway terminal and were dispatched to their destinations by steamers.[41]

In response to the increased steamer traffic on Georgian Bay, Meaford received an added boon in 1856 when the Government assisted the township in building a wharf capable of accommodating the largest vessels on the Great Lakes.[42] Tradesmen and professionals arrived to set up their businesses and make permanent homes. Carpenters, jointers, sawyers and wagon makers mixed with bricklayers, physicians, teachers and general merchants. The full spectrum of services available within the burgeoning community ensured Meaford a strong presence within St. Vincent Township and the County of Grey.

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[38] A.R.M. Lower, A.R.M., "British North America in the 1860's", 10. See also, Francis, R. Douglas, Richard Jones, Donald B. Smith, *Origins: Canadian History to Confederation*, 275-77. The Reciprocity Treaty of 1854 between the Canadas and the United States bolstered free trade of natural products, such as timber, grain, coal, livestock and fish, in which the economy of Canada West greatly benefited. The Crimean War created a demand for Canadian wheat, and the construction of railroads created a demand for timber and labor, all supplied through the burgeoning frontier economy.

[39] E.L. Marsh, *History of the County of Grey*, 255.

[40] W.W. Smith, "The Early Days of Owen Sound", 13.

[41] James H. Rutherford, "Early Navigation on the Georgian Bay", 16.

[42] E.L. Marsh, *History of the County of Grey*, 268.

All of this busy enterprise within the local context did not occur in a vacuum, but was subject to a social, political and religious ferment that indelibly marked the early to mid-Victorian era in Upper Canada. Canada West in the years immediately prior to confederation was in a state of profound change, reacting to the tumult between the Scottish Common Sense tradition of the late 18th and early 19th century, and the impact of the growth capitalism and secularization of religion and social philosophy. A brief overview of these forces help to describe the social and religious setting for the period of time Muir spent living, working, and interacting with friends, the community and the natural environment of the region.

Scottish Common Sense and the growth of secularism in mid-Victorian English Canada

Upper Canada in the early to mid 1800's was greatly influenced by the Scottish side of its intellectual heritage. The Scottish Common Sense school of thought provided a philosophical framework for the social matrix of English Canada in the early to mid-Victorian era.[43] This legacy underscored several key social ideas, including the necessity of popular education (which was in keeping with Presbyterianism) that encouraged both secular and religious social ideas, and a broader, more 'democratic intellectualism' that embraced the humanities and philosophy.[44] The Scottish Common Sense school also advocated, through the thought of Scottish philosopher, Thomas Reid, a theory of perception that the Mind and God were connected and that the "great truths of mankind and the little truths of everyday experience…were matters of common sense: they rest with "the reach of common understanding.""[45]

While the Scottish Common Sense school supported Baconian empirical science, it also agreed with the ability of the mind to function as a 'moral faculty', and in this, reason was accepted as one aspect of the power of the mind, but could not "…question truths that are self-evident, for which no proof can be demonstrated…." This ability belonged to the 'moral faculty' of the mind in contact with God's will.[46] Within early Victorian English Canada, this provided a very effective philosophy that controlled the speculative ideas behind scientific experimentation and other such 'wild' ideas. It also fundamentally separated subject and object, perception and consciousness, and God and Creation. It was very useful to the religious establishment to retain the security of a prosaic dogmatism that didn't create unnecessary upset to religion or social constructs during the early Victorian period.

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[43] A.B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era,* (Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 24-5.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid. 26.

To complement the Common Sense school, natural theology was advocated in the colleges and universities of English Canada, and espoused the same dualistic approach. Natural theology separated the material and the spiritual, and linked human intellect to the will of God through piety. Natural theology supported the order of religious orthodoxy, but, like the Common Sense school, was challenged by social change, modern science, and by an increasingly powerful capitalism brought about by burgeoning industrial growth.

Darwin published *Origin of Species* in 1859 and during the storm of controversy that ensued, the traditional practice of natural history and the pairing of science and faith in natural theology were reduced to anachronisms.[47] Scottish Common Sense did not fare much better. With the rise of secularization, belief systems within society began to shift and change, and the old religious orthodoxy began to decay. Secularization has been described as the result of "..urban-industrial growth where socio-economic cleavages make it plain that there can be no real concensus about social values that once claimed the sanction of religious authority."[48] Canadian social historian, Ramsay Cook, describes the process of secular change in the Victorian era as a result of a rise in social criticism that was sparked by Darwinian science and criticism of the Bible, and from this, brought about a religious movement that addressed social salvation rather than the salvation of man.[49] It was an interesting transition, and also marked the shift from sectarian denominations that addressed Protestantism through experience, towards a blended approach of 'experience' and 'order' that contributed to a change in church structure.

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[46] Ibid. 28.

[47] Carl Berger, *Science, God and Nature in Victorian Canada,* 53.

[48] Alistair MacIntyre, *Secularization and Moral Change*, (London 1967), quoted in Ramsay Cook, *the Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 5.

[49] Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators, 4.*

Within the Protestant tradition in English Canada during the early Victorian period, there were many small Protestant groups scattered about the pioneer frontlines, but by the early 1880s, the number of small groups had fallen drastically, coalescing into four major Protestant denominations (Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists and Anglicans) that comprised close to 98% of the population of Ontario.[50] From this process of religious consensus came a distinct Protestant culture shaped by religious ideas, education, and moral teachings. The competition and tensions in this process contributed to the religious and social transition of the mid to late Victorian period.

The processes of social and religious change in English Canada were beginning to occur before Muir lived and worked near Meaford, and continued during and for a period after he returned to the United States. On the community and personal level, these larger social and religious forces became part of the milieu of Muir's Canadian experience, and were felt most profoundly through his interaction with the Trout family, and the religious and social life in Meaford, Canada West.

The Evolution of Religious Worship in Meaford and Canada West

Religion was a key element in the early life of John Muir, as it was in the lives of his Canadian friends, the Trout family. The nature of frontier religious beliefs and practice is foundational to the discussion of how religious influences related to Muir's evolving personal worldview. Contextually, frontier religion was as tumultuous and shifting as Muir's growing sense of disenchantment with religious orthodoxy. In this section, I discuss the social, economic and political elements of frontier religion in Upper Canada, and then deal specifically with a history of the Disciples of Christ. These historical overviews provide the context to a later discussion regarding elements of John Muir's life with the Trout family that were linked to the Disciples of Christ in Meaford, and his eventual movement towards a worldview infused with his own independent religious thought.

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[50] William Westfall, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth Century Ontario,* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 11.

The construction of churches in 1856 within the village of Meaford indicated a social milestone along the road towards an established and fully functioning community. In the early pioneer days evangelical sectarian religion was prevalent along the frontier front, but with the gradual increase in economic development and strengthening of frontier capitalism, the evangelical sects gradually gave way to the establishment of denominational churches. Meaford was not immune from the religious and social forces that created the shift towards established churches or from the often contentious debate accompanying the shift away from sectarian religious practice.

During the late 1700 and early 1800's, the Church of England was established as the traditional institution for religious worship in Upper Canada. Mainly established in the larger centres of population, the Church was both ill-disposed and ill-equipped to minister to the thousands of immigrants who made their way to the frontier front lines. The traditional Church clergy were reluctant to leave the relative comfort of the larger centres to minister to the poor and scattered farmer-settlers, preferring to stay in the towns where both class and political allegiance to the old world order was more in keeping with ecclesiastical doctrine and ritual.[51] Further, insistence on fully trained but scarce clergy for missionary work hampered the reach of the traditional Church, and a certain rigidity in denominational ministration excluded many rural people who were not of that religious persuasion. The traditional Church simply could not keep up with the rapid social movement into the backwoods of Upper Canada, leaving the gate open for the evangelical sectarian movements of that era. Methodists, Baptists, Scotch Baptists, Wesleyan Methodists, Campbellites, and Pentecostals, to name a few, expanded into the void left by the inadequate missionary outreach of the Church of England.

In protest to the traditional Church's effort to create an all encompassing state Church which would bring all disparate religious groups under one roof, the sectarian schisms chose to concentrate on the individual's direct relationship to God, rejecting outright traditional religious systems and denominational intrigue. The purpose of the sect was, to put it succinctly,

> …to restore the original purity of the true faith by returning to the source of the movement, ignoring and rejecting all that has happened in the meantime, namely the accumulation of tradition.[52]

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[51] S.D. Clark, "The Backwoods Society of Upper Canada", *The Developing Canadian Community*, 74.

[52] John S. Moir, "Sectarian Tradition in Canada", *The Churches and the Canadian Experience,* John Webster Grant, ed., (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1963, reprinted 1966), 119.

Sectarian evangelism began then, as an endeavor to return to a more primitive form of Christian worship and to gain freedom from established Church traditions. In order to accomplish this goal, sectarian reformist movement advocated door-to-door service of religious ministration, non-denominationalism, and membership in the spiritual elect which required nothing more than a common experience of faith.

As was common in the frontier reaches of Upper Canada, the early pioneers in St. Vincent Township and the County of Grey relied upon saddle-bag preachers, traveling evangelists and local religious leaders. Generally, the traveling sectarian preachers were without professional training, preached in any available venue, and were often otherwise employed for their own financial support.[53] From an economic perspective this was beneficial to frontier society for the tremendous need for capital and labor in creating the first rudimentary settlements left little for expensive established churches or highly paid clergy.[54] In addition to financial necessity, the social order of the frontier people, with their stiff-lipped independence, distrust of centralized power and rejection of the old-world class system was fertile ground for the sectarian movement.

Protesting against the formalized rituals, class orientation and allegiance to the state that underpinned the traditional Church, the pioneers embraced the evangelical idealism to religious reform found in the sectarian movements. With little political power and resenting centralized government decrees on such issues as land grants, road infrastructure and taxation, the scattered and isolated settlers found a voice for their political dissatisfaction through sectarianism.[55] Embracing the "sect spirit of sharp separation of religious matters from worldly affairs" the disenfranchised and isolated pioneers were able to find a sense of self worth through religious faith rather than economic and social success.[56] The appeal of the sectarian movement therefore greatly appealed to the socially and economically marginalized old-world immigrant, the adventurer, and the hard working, isolated farmer-settler. The early sectarian movement formed a religious fellowship that the pioneers felt were uniquely their own, bringing about a sense of community solidarity and social cohesiveness that was greatly needed in the first difficult settlement years.

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[53] S.D. Clark, "The Religious Sect in Canadian Politics", in *The Developing Canadian Community,* 150.

[54] Ibid. 135.

[55] Ibid. 134.

[56] S.D. Clark, "The Great Revival in Canada", Church and Sect in Canada, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948), 93.

In St. Vincent Township and the County of Grey this early frontier religious pattern evolved in the fledgling communities and scattered settlement clearings. As Alexander Stephens recalled, early religious leadership was dedicated, accessible and inclusive.

> …Father Neelands, who lived in St. Vincent and not only paid regular visits to the town but took the entire settlement under his care… (I) remember him only as a man advanced in years, devoted to the service of his Master, tramping from house to house (or rather from shanty to shanty) with words of advice and encouragement to all, without respect to creed, colour or nationality.[57]

Not all religious teachers were of such gentle persistent disposition as Father Neelands, but many were committed and traveled great distances to bring religious teachings to the scattered communities and rough homesteads. Reverend Egerton Ryerson, a Wesleyan Methodist speaker of charismatic force, found the small settlements in great need of "temporal and spiritual food" [58] During one trip in Upper Canada, Ryerson brought his message from Yonge Street (north of Toronto) to Holland Landing, across Lake Simcoe to Barrie, over to the Nottawasaga River, and then on to St. Vincent. Sectarian evangelism on this scale did much to bring religious worship to the widely scattered population in the Georgian Bay frontier.

As the frontier gradually gave way before the advance of the settlers, and villages and towns began to take shape, a new era of economic growth and prosperity was due in part to the asceticism advocated by sectarian religion. Hard work, clean living, frugality, piousness; all standards of ascetic conduct, were foundations to the growth of a capitalist economy in Upper Canada in the mid 1800's. Paradoxically however, with an increase in personal wealth and security came a major challenge to sectarian frontier religion. Sectarian evangelism had appealed to the politically marginalized and the poor. Through increased economic development along the frontier, the population gradually became more enterprising, working steadily towards greater personal and community wealth. After all, "the dominant drive of the capitalist frontier was that of economic exploitation."[59]

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[57] A.M. Stephens, "Early Days of Owen Sound", File 969-88-160, County of Grey-Owen Sound Museum, Owen Sound, Ontario, 8.

[58] Ibid. 9.

[59] S.D. Clark, "The Religious Sect in Canadian Economic Development" in *The Developing Canadian Community*, 150.

A conflict of values ensued between the asceticism of the sect and the increased wealth of its members, forcing a reconsideration of sectarian doctrine. The original role of the sect in providing a model of discipline for the working pioneer gradually gave way to the secular economic rewards of doing a good job and being paid well for the work.[60] An increase in discretionary income, the burgeoning of community economic development and the questioning of early sectarian values underpinned the evolution of the sect to a denominational church.

In Meaford, as the frontier settlement grew into a thriving village, allegiance to sectarian evangelism gradually gave way to the establishment of churches and meeting houses. The ongoing debate between the intent and activities of frontier sectarian evangelism versus the movement towards established churches and denominationalism was a contentious topic at the time the Muir brothers arrived in Meaford. As will be discussed later this chapter, the role of sect and church was certainly a matter of discussion within the Trout family, and by affiliation, became a contextual element of Muir's stay in Trout Hollow.[61]

The first two churches of Meaford were erected in 1856. The Canadian Presbyterian Church, an octagon building of solid brick, was the first to be constructed. The Church of Christ opened soon thereafter, providing a meeting place for the Disciples of Christ.[62] William Trout Sr. founded the Meaford Church of Christ and remained a leading force in its early history throughout his life. The pioneers that came to Grey County were of many different Christian persuasions, both sectarian and denominational. Over the course of settlement and the gradual retreat of the frontier front line, congregations began to put down roots and establish well-constructed churches. With the loss of the frontier and the gain of a stable community population coupled with economic wealth, the communities began to establish permanent church buildings. Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Pentecostals, Methodists, Presbyterians and Mennonites were all represented in the first settlements of the County of Grey.[63] The Meaford Church of Christ, however, is the most relevant to this discussion, as the history of the Canadian Disciples Church of Christ underlies Muir's personal search for his own worldview and his relations with the Trout family. As William Henry Trout so succinctly put it, "The Trout family history is closely interwoven with the history of the St. Vincent, afterwards the Meaford, congregation of Disciples of Christ."[64]

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[60] Ibid. 159.

[61] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History*, 92.

[62] E.L. Marsh, *History of the County of Grey*, 269.

[63] History of the County of Grey, page 399- 403

The Roots of the Disciples of Christ Movement in Canada

> Our roots derive from the British Isles, where beginners of our way of Dissent and Progress were either formed or varied along the trails of Glas-Sandeman and Haldane Movements in Scotland and Ireland during the eighteenth century.
>
> All these eventuated in the Scotch Baptist contribution to Canada, which affected us vastly more than it did "America."[65]

Scottish pioneers in frontier Canada brought elements of self-sufficiency and democratic idealism to their religious beliefs, expressing dissatisfaction and dissent towards the "creeds that divided Christians into a variety of established and sectarian bodies."[66] The Old Scotch Baptist faith was the cornerstone religion of many of these Scottish pioneers, but also became the roots of a sectarian religious movement during the great Religious Revival of the early 1800's, the Canadian Disciples of Christ. In Upper Canada during the 1820's, James Black, a Scotch Baptist, was already independently preaching some of the views of the later Canadian Disciples movement. By the 1830's, Black had become aware of the Campbellite movement in the United States, advanced by the charismatic leader, Alexander Campbell. A recognition of similarity of teachings prompted a melding of the two streams of religious thought, and Black began to teach and preach the Disciples cause in Eramosa, Canada West, by 1832.[67] Due to the Scotch Baptist roots of the Canadian Disciples of Christ, many of the Canadian followers did not recognize the American name "Campellites", choosing to retain the name Disciples, or Disciples of Christ.

How did the Canadian Disciples of Christ movement come about, and what were the foundational elements of their conviction to leave the established traditional churches? This requires a look at the historical roots of the Disciple's faith, and how the foundational principles of the sect informed the lives of its members.

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[64] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History*, 92.

[65] Reuban Butchart, *The Disciples of Christ in Canada*, (Toronto: Canadian Headquarters Publications, Churches of Christ (Disciples), 1949), preface xiii.

[66] Brian Boden, "The Disciples and Frontier Religion: The Scottish Baptist Roots of the Restoration Movement in 19th Century Ontario" in *The Campbell-Stone Movement in Ontario*, Claude E. Cox, ed., (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1995), 28.

[67] Reuban Butchart, *The Disciples of Christ in Canada*, 415.

Between the fall of 1555 and the summer of 1556, the most important leader of the Scottish Reformation, John Knox, managed to unify Scottish Protestants into a militant, tightly knit party that adhered to strict Calvinist doctrine. He enlisted the aid of the Protestant noblemen, specifically James Stewart, the Duke of Moray, and with their help Protestantism gained a strong foothold in Scotland. Scottish Presbyterianism was practiced with stringent intellectual focus and a strict puritanical adherence to the Old Testament. However, over time, schisms developed within the Presbyterian movement itself, and small independent religious movements erupted. The splinter sects rose in protest to the control of the state on religious practice, and to what they felt to be an erosion of doctrinal purity.

The Disciples of Christ trace their roots back to these protest movements against Scottish Presbyterianism, to the sectarian movements that advocated restoration of the "apostolic pattern of the primitive church."[68] A melding of influences by three earlier sectarian movements can be traced to the Disciples of Christ. In 1728, a sectarian movement led by John Glas protested state control of the church and as a result became staunchly independent. They were named the 'Glasites' or 'Sandemanians' after Glas' son-in-law, Robert Sandeman, an exceptional theological reformer in his own right. From the Glasites emerged some of the foundational elements of the Disciples of Christ movement. Glas believed that the congregation should be able to function on its own, and he rejected doctrinal dogma and disciplinary action from an overseer church that sought to control the congregational organization. Above all, the Glasites advocated a return to a New Testament church form – and a return to the order and discipline of primitive Christianity. The beliefs of this sect were described by 19th century Canadian Disciples of Christ scholar, David Oliphant.

> The gist of them is that the kingdom of the Lord Jesus on earth is a spiritual kingdom, and that his laws and institutions can only be understood and obeyed by "believing" men. With this as a leading principle, they have never asked the assistance of educated or talented men to propound their convictions of scared duty. No college nor university degree has ever graced (or rather disgraced) their eldership. Their simplicity and sincerity are observable in all they do; they court no popular attraction; they are most exclusive; they never extend their influence beyond the walls of their own chapel; those 'without' are, in their judgement, brought to the knowledge of the true God 'in' Christ Jesus, more by the divine power through the 'written word', illustrated and exemplified by the meeting of the church on the 'first day' of the week, than by sermon-making or

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[68] Brian Boden, *The Disciples and Frontier Religion*, 9.

> 'preaching.' They hold to a plurality of elders in each congregation, though they retain one when without two.[69]

While the foundational principles of the Glasites had a direct influence in the Disciples of Christ movement in the United States, the principles were only a starting point for the reformation envisioned by the American Disciples of Christ movement. In Upper Canada, the Scotch Baptist Church was also influenced by the stringent communionist ideals of the Glasites, which in turn formed the basis of the early Canadian movement of the Disciples of Christ.

The third movement that affected the Disciples movement came from the Haldanes. Similar in many respects to the Glasite movement, the Haldanes were noted for a more accepting attitude to other Christian denominations and sects. They too adhered to the New Testament as the ultimate source of religious instruction concerning worship and Christian conduct. Christians, they believed, are bound to "observe the universal and approved practices of the first churches recorded in Scripture."[70]

The Disciples of Christ protest movement in North America was initiated by Thomas Campbell and his son, Alexander. Thomas Campbell was a Presbyterian minister who broke from his church in protest to the proliferation of religious sectarianism and the doctrinal strictures placed upon the fellowship. He believed that a unification of all Christians was a necessity, and the fracturing of the faith into a multitude of sects and churches was antithetical to the intent of the Scriptures. Although Thomas Campbell framed the principles of the Disciples, it was his son Alexander who provided the charismatic leadership that drew a multitude of followers. Alexander Campbell was also a Presbyterian, but while studying in Scotland as a young man, he was introduced to the tenets of the Glasites, Haldanes and Scotch Baptists. Like his father, he began to believe that reform was critical for the unification of all Christians.

The Campbells immigrated to America, and through another series of breaks from conservative Presbyterian clergy councils and the Scotch Baptist church, they formed the Christian Association of Washington. Embracing members from many different denominations, the group advocated Christian unity. Thomas Campbell drew up the principles of the "Declaration and Address" for the association which in turn became the foundation for the Disciples of Christ in North America.[71] In brief, the intent of the principles within the Declaration included,

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[69] Ibid, 10.
[70] Ibid. 13.

> …each person's right of private judgement on the interpretation of Scripture, upon the peaceable unity among Christians that would result in the foregoing, and upon the exact conformity of the church to the New Testament.[72]

Breaking with Presbyterian creed, the final split with the Presbyterian Church occurred when the Disciples advocated baptism by complete immersion. Through an affiliation with the Baptists in Ohio, the Disciples then extended their sphere if influence, winning converts and establishing congregations. In 1827, the Campbellite congregations began to refer to themselves as the Disciples of Christ, but in doing so the movement that spoke for Christian unity ironically succeeded in adding one more sect to the ranks of Christianity.[73]

Frontier mentality was comprised of raw individuality and democratic ideals, and it encouraged community cohesion and neighborliness. It is not surprising therefore, that the defining characteristics of the Disciples, with their support of lay interpretation of the Bible, focus on Christian unity, and strict adherence to the teachings of the New Testament found a significant following on the frontier. Shedding the doctrine of the old, state-controlled churches and seeking a do-it-yourself way of bringing Christianity into their lives, many people embraced the Disciples of Christ sect. The sectarian emphasis on complete devotion to the word of God, for "the Bible not only contains the word of God, it is the word of God" was a main principle of the Disciples.[74] A return to primitive Christianity was the primary focus of the Disciples movement, and they often used the slogan, "In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity" to condense the meaning of the movement's founding principles.[75]

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[71] Lester G. McAllister, William E. Tucker, *Journey into Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1975), 111-14. The "Declaration and Address", written by Thomas Campbell, is considered a document "of great significance in the development and promotion of Christian unity and is considered an important document in the history of the ecumenical movement."

[72] Brian Boden, *The Disciples and Frontier Religion*, 19.

[73] Ibid. 23.

[74] Ibid. 25.

[75] Lester G. McAllister and William E. Tucker, *Journey into Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, 21.

The Canadian Disciples movement was more directly influenced by the Scotch Baptists. The Scotch Baptist Church at Norval, Esquesing Township, established in 1820, became the foundation for the Disciples movement in Upper Canada.[76] It appears that the movement towards the Disciples of Christ in Canada emerged independently from enclaves of Scotch Baptist congregations.

Following the establishment of the Eramosa Disciples of Christ Church in 1832 under the leadership of James Black, the Norval Church, under the guidance of presiding Pastor, John Menzies, also became a Disciples of Christ Church. Although the Norval, Esquesing church was documented as "Church of Christ in Esquesing, instituted in 1820", it was actually initially established as a Scotch Baptist Church.[77] John Menzies was not exposed to Alexander Campbell's writings until around 1836, and eventually came to agree with the Campbellite approach. It appears that the Norval Church "grew peacefully into the principles of the Campbellian reformation."[78]

In 1838, William Trout joined John Menzies as a Scotch Baptist Pastor, with leanings towards Disciples of Christ principles, in the Esquesing church. He too was introduced to the writings of the Campbellite movement through the instruction of John Menzies and copies of the Campbellite publication, the Millennial Harbinger. Subsequently, the Norval church aligned with the Disciples of Christ in 1843.[79]

Between 1830 and the 1880's, Disciples congregations expanded in Ontario. With the proliferation of frontier sects, churches began to organize and the Disciples began to visualize their movement as something larger and more cohesive than small isolated enclaves. During this period, William Trout became an agent for the expansion of the Disciples, working with the churches in Norval and Huronontario, and then led with others to the founding the Disciples of Christ Church in Meaford. By the time the Muir brothers arrived in Meaford, the Disciples of Christ church had established itself as a focal point in the lives of the local brethren, and William Trout was an acknowledged Elder within the congregation.

Elements of the foundational principles of the Disciples of Christ sectarian movement underlie the context of Muir's Canadian period. These principles emphasized the individual's right to a personal judgement on their interpretation of the Scriptures, the sole authority of the New Testament as God's true word, the evil of sectarianism and the divisiveness of creeds, and complete conformity to the Bible as a basis for Christian unity.[80] Not only are the Disciples teachings foundational to Muir's young life under his father's religious instruction, but they are foundational to the Trout family and therefore are contextually a part of Muir's life in Trout Hollow.

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[76] Butchart, Reuban, *The Disciples of Christ in Canada since 1830*, 392.

[77] Ibid. 389.

[78] Ibid. 390.

[79] Ibid, 390-91.

Rendering the Disciples basic principles to an even more foundational level, to elements that embrace independent judgment and conviction; the 'Book' as the literal word of God and therefore the ultimate source of truth; abhorrence to divisive creeds; and a search for universal unity – as will be discussed later in this chapter, all of these elements became foundational to Muir's evolving worldview. Further, the tension between the economic imperatives of survival, the sectarian rebellion against traditional modes of religious thought and centralized political power, and the eventual movement towards established churches also played a contextual role in Muir's life in Trout Hollow. The complexity of the myriad of relations during Muir's Canadian period provided a lot of 'grist' for the mill of Muir's thought. As we shall see, Trout Hollow provided a lot more for Muir than just a winter 'den' and steady work, it was a period of deep introspection and personal growth; an important milestone in his evolving philosophical worldview.

Trout Hollow

> In a beautiful dell, only a mile or two from the magnificent bay, I fortunately found work in a factory where there was a sawmill and lathes for turning out rake, broom and fork handles, etc.[81]

John and Daniel Muir arrived in the lovely forested valley of the Bighead River one early fall afternoon in 1864. Making their way along the valley to a point approximately two kilometres south of the town of Meaford, they came to a wide looping bend in the river. At this point, the Bighead River carves through a long gravel ridge that marks the ancient beachhead of glacial-age Algonquin Lake. Nestled within the elbow of the bend about one hundred fifty feet below the gravel ridge was a substantial pond fed by a millrace off the main river, more than likely contained by a standard gravel filled dam.[82] From the dam, a flume ran down to the sawmill, providing ample waterpower to run the mill machinery. Near the pond was a "fair log house with cobbled gables and an elm bark roof" and a small log stable.[83] Access to the valley bottom from the ridge top was along a steep short road, supported on the outside edge by log reinforcements.[84]

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[80] Lester G. McAllister and William E. Tucker, *Journey into Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, 112.

[81] W.F. Badè, *The Life and Letters of John Muir*, 74-5.

Known locally as Trout Hollow, the little valley bend on the Bighead River was (and still is) a quietly beautiful site with forested slopes surrounding the lively sparkling river. In spring and summer, birdsong and sunshine suffused the air and flowering plants grew in profusion. In fall, the predominantly deciduous forest rose like a gold and crimson curtain around the riverbanks. Into this, Daniel and John Muir made their way with hope of finding employment and a congenial home for the winter.

Walking into the dell, Daniel would likely have oriented his older brother to the mill site and cabin owned and operated by his friends, William Henry Trout and Charles Hugh Jay. The sawmill workings were powered by a water wheel, a standard source of power for the conventional upright saw system of mid 1800 sawmill operations.[85] Originally planned by William Henry Trout in late June 1855, the cabin, sawmill, millrace, dam, flue and water wheel were constructed by William H. Trout and hired laborers by early April 1856. In response to markets, the mill was eventually fitted with lathe machinery, a carding machine and fulling mill for making wool and cloth. At the time of John and Daniel's arrival, the Trout & Jay Company had been making harvest tools of various kinds and was hopeful of a "fair degree of success."[86]

That evening, William Henry Trout returned from Meaford to find the Muir brothers waiting. After introductions and 'general friendly chat,' John asked about the possibility of work, outlining their real and immediate need for a steady income and a secure home for the winter.[87] From earlier talks with Daniel, William H. Trout knew something of John Muir's inventive abilities and after some discussion, hired the brothers to help build an addition to the mill, a factory for making rakes. The agreement, Trout deemed, was "profitable to us and helpful to them."[88]

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[82] Bruce Cox, "John Muir and His Canadian Friends", December 1998, Canadian Friends of John Muir website: www@johnmuir.org/cos.html. Local historian at Meaford and Owen Sound, Ontario, Bruce Cox notes, "the conventional method was to build a series of log cribs and to fill them with coarse gravel. It appears that the dam, however constructed, remained sound for the life of the mill."

[83] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History*, 104, 108.

[84] Bruce Cox, "John Muir and His Canadian Friends", Canadian Friends of John Muir.

[85] Ibid. Although no record exists detailing the sawmill works at Trout Hollow, Bruce Cox suggests that the upright saw, or up-and-down saw system was likely the type used by the Trout & Jay Company.

[86] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History*, 121.

The life long friendship that ensued between John Muir and the Trout family began with the agreement to work and live together for their mutual benefit, but quickly became more than simply a business arrangement. For John Muir, the relationships formed in Trout Hollow and Meaford were important elements in what was rather a tumultuous and confusing period in his life. He stayed in Trout Hollow for approximately a year and a half, and in this time his relationship with the Trout Hollow 'family' and occasional interaction with the larger community in Meaford, his increasingly liberal approach to religion, and his inventive work at the mill all underscore his growing sense of independence and confidence. It was a time of personal searching, when Muir attempted to balance the publicly acceptable role of mechanical invention and mill-work with his need to engage nature through botanical study. Restlessness and indecision plagued him during this period, as well as impatience and growing sense of dissatisfaction with what he had accomplished to that point.

Through all of this, Muir's relationships with the members of the Trout Hollow group had both a stabilizing effect as well as prompting deeper self reflection, and in many cases, doubt and restlessness. The Trout family was specifically central to Muir's life at this time, their family history, ways of living, religious practice and worldviews became part of the complex network of relations that suffused Muir's Trout Hollow days. As such, a study of the Trout family, their history, religious beliefs, personal characters and response to the demands of frontier life in Upper Canada provide ways to describe the internal and external context of Muir's Trout Hollow period.

The Trout Family

Daniel Muir's suggestion to seek work and a home with the Trout family during the winter of 1864-65 could perhaps be attributed to similarities between the Trout family and the Muir family in Wisconsin.

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[87] Ibid. 123.

[88] Ibid.

Both families were of Scottish stock and were members of the Disciples of Christ, a religious sectarian movement at times referred to as the Campbellites. Each family had weathered many hardships to gain a steady livelihood, the Muir family in the early settlement days of Wisconsin and the Trout family on the frontier edges of Upper Canada. There was also a similar contingent of young people in each family, Anne and Daniel Muir had three boys and five girls while the surviving family of William and Catherine Trout was comprised of six boys (of which only two were living in Trout Hollow) and four girls.[89] The patriarchal heads of each family, William Trout Sr. and Daniel Muir Sr., were dedicated to the evangelical work of their religious beliefs, each becoming in his own way a recognized community religious leader. Anne Gilrye Muir and Catherine MacKinnon Trout were Scottish born and from accounts by their children, supported and cared for their children with gentle pious guidance.

Apparently, sharing the same religious background was important in the decision to accept Daniel Muir, and later both Muir brothers into the Trout Hollow 'family.' Recounting Daniel's request for work in August 1864, Peter L. Trout noted, "The situation for him was very much improved when we learned that he and his people belonged to the same church that we did, that is the Disciples, or the Cambelites [sic] as they used to be called."[90] Scottish clannishness may have played a part in the mutual acceptance of the Muir brothers and the Trout family, but adherence to the same frontier sectarian movement helped to strengthen family and community relations through membership in the Disciples of Christ Church. Away from their own home and unable to return because of the Civil War, the Muir brothers found in the Trout Hollow a group of young Canadians who were remarkably similar in upbringing, family religious beliefs and a frontier work ethic.

The Trout family history is illustrative of the many trials and uncertainties of early pioneer life in Upper Canada. The Trout family story also illustrates the need for practical, unrelenting hard work in order to live and raise a family, the role that religious and frontier social organization had upon the Trout family's way of life, and by extension, provides a critical context to John Muir's Trout Hollow sojourn.

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[89] Ibid. 53. The Trout family tree lists a total of twelve children born to William Trout, two children with his first wife, Margaret Frank, and ten children with his second wife, Catherine McKinnon. Childhood mortality reduced the family to ten children at the time of Muir's stay in Trout Hollow.

[90] Peter Liard Trout, "What I Know About John Muir", 3.

William Henry Trout, friend and contemporary to John Muir, was a second generation Canadian, his father William Trout Sr. having been born in Fort Erie, Ontario in 1801 to landed immigrant and British soldier, Henry George Trout, and his Connecticut-born wife, Rachel Emerson Trout.

William Henry Trout's paternal grandfather, Henry G. Trout saw service during the War of 1812 between the Americans and British, and subsequently became one of the disbanded British military who settled in the raw and promising frontier of Upper Canada.[91] Born to Henry George and Rachel were four sons and six daughters, a respectable sized family during that era. Henry George Trout was an Episcopalian, a member of the traditional Church of England, but apparently had some ties with the frontier sectarian movement through Wesleyan and Episcopal Methodists.[92] As discussed earlier, the lack of educated clergy in the early years of the 19th century left the frontier of Upper Canada without sufficient religious ministration from the Church of England. In response, many of the traditional church followers were taken in by the frontier sectarian movements for lack of an alternative.[93] This may have been the case with Henry George Trout and his family, for the reach of the Methodist movement into rural Upper Canada was highly successful.[94] Henry George Trout's belief in the citizen's right to religious beliefs may have stemmed from this period, whatever the cause, these principles also influenced the religious life of his second eldest son, William Trout.

William Trout was the second son born to Henry George Trout and his wife Rachel on June 20th, 1801, and was raised in the vicinity of Fort Erie where his father ran a stagecoach service into the 'new Canadian country'. William grew up in the midst of social and political upheaval, witnessing the War of 1812 when he was a stripling lad of thirteen, and learning from his father both the pragmatic handling of frontier justice and a code of principles regarding a citizen's right to religious beliefs.[95] William Trout became a carpenter and millwright, and in his first marriage to Margaret Frank had two children, Mary and George. The family settled on the land grant in Erin Township that had been granted by the government to make up for the farm and business losses to Henry George Trout during the War of 1812.

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[91] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History*, 4.

[92] Ibid, 36.

[93] S.D. Clark, "The Great Revival in Canada", *Church and Sect in Canada*, 107.

[94] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 36. See also, S.D. Clark, *Church and Sect in Canada*, 100. "The Methodist was the dominant evangelical religious movement which developed out of the Great Revival in Canada after 1790…"

[95] Ibid. 4-28. William Henry Trout makes extensive references to war stories told to him by his father, William Trout, in which William Sr. recounted the social problems of rampant petty thievery and the issues engendered by applying political pressure upon men whose religious beliefs would not allow them to fight.

William Trout's first wife, Margaret died in 1831, leaving him with two young children and the Erin farm to manage. Although raised as an Episcopalian under his father's allegiance to the traditional Church of England, William Trout was Canadian born, independent in character and more of a reformist than his father.[96] The traditional church was unable to hold his interest and commitment, and as with many of the independent pioneers of that day, he spent some time seeking a more fitting religious home. Eventually he joined the Erin Scotch Baptist congregation led by Donald MacLaren, and was baptized by complete immersion in an Erin creek, a Scotch Baptist practice that raised a fair amount of local interest.[97] Committed to the Scotch Baptists, William Trout became an accepted Elder and religious teacher in the community.

Through the congregation meetings William Trout met Catherine McKinnon, a young immigrant from the Isle of Mull in Scotland who was at that time living with relatives in Erin Township. Although Catherine was not immediately taken with the studious and attentive widower she was eventually won over and consented to marriage. They were married in Erin Township in 1833.

William Henry Trout was born to Catherine and William on February 15, 1834 on the Erin farm. Shortly thereafter, William Trout Sr. sold the farm and purchased a small mill site in Esquesing Township, approximately ten miles from Henry George Trout's homestead. Here, William Sr. pursued work as a carpenter and millwright, constructing and operating both a sawmill and gristmill with the help of a business partner. William Henry's brothers, Edward and John were born in Esquesing in 1835 and 1837, significantly adding to the family and the responsibilities of both parents.

Unfortunately, Esquesing was to be a place of deep sorrow and financial calamity for the family. William Sr.'s eldest son from his first marriage, George, died in 1837 at the age of eight years. When

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These lessons were not only important to the formation of William Sr.'s principles, but also influenced William's son, William Henry Trout.

[96] Ibid. 36.

[97] Ibid. 48. In keeping with the growth of the sectarian reformist movement of the great Religious Revival, new sects and uncommon religious rites were greeted in pioneer communities with either a mixture of skepticism and hostility, or curious interest.

William Sr. was later incapacitated for months due to a traumatic knee injury, the business began to founder. In addition to these troubles, William Trout' business partner proved unscrupulous, absconding with all the cash on hand. William Sr. was left to face the mill creditors alone. Although young, William Henry remembers his tearful mother pleading with the debt collectors as they confiscated the family cows. So sheltered were the children from this calamity that it wasn't until much later that William Henry realized their trouble at that time had been "real and deep."[98] Hearing the story from his mother, William Henry would add this family history lesson to his already well-developed sense of fiscal responsibility and pragmatic common sense in the face of the sharp economics of life. It was to become a mainstay of the deeply ingrained sense of responsibility he purported throughout his life.

After this devastating loss, the family subsequently moved to the village of Norval, Esquesing Township, where William Sr., using his substantial carpentry and mechanical skills leased and put new life into an old flourmill. Although it took many years to dig out from under the Esquesing debt, William Sr. never abdicated his responsibility to that end, eventually managing to do so eleven years later. This too was a lesson that William Henry never forgot, for like his father, he felt a real responsibility to maintain the integrity of the family name.

Although these were hard times for the Trout family, there were also bright moments. The family bloomed in Norval with the addition of James, Peter and Harriet. Large families were the norm, and pioneer women were bound to a never-ending round of domestic work. In 1844, Catherine Trout was eternally busy with eight children underfoot, Mary the eldest child at 13, followed by William Henry, Edward, John, James, Peter, Harriet and the addition of another baby girl, Janet. It could not have been easy. She was a quiet woman, articulate in her native Gaelic but unable to speak English fluently. With their Scottish mother having such a direct bearing on their young lives, the Trout children were distinctly aware of their strong Scots heritage. It is feasible that the children understood Scots Gaelic and may have picked up vocal inflections and speech mannerisms from their mother. In Upper Canada during the 1800's, this would not have been out of place, for the proliferation of Scots, Irish and English in the region ensured that a strong Gael element rooted itself in the scattered farmsteads, villages and townships.

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[98] Ibid. 56-7.

In Norval, William Sr. joined a Scotch Baptist congregation led by revered Elder John Menzies. At some point around 1836, Menzies began to read the Millenniel Harbinger, the publication espousing the principles and beliefs of the Alexander Campbell and the Disciples movement in the United States. According to Menzies' son, the journal "enlightened" his father's mind to the Disciples teachings.[99] It was also at this time that William Trout Sr. began to seriously study the writings of Alexander Campbell.[100] William Sr. soon became the recognized second to John Menzies as leader of the congregation, and by June 1843, the little Scotch Baptist congregation in Norval had "officially denominated themselves as "Disciples of Christ" or "Christians."[101]

William Henry was taken to his first church meeting in Norval. The growing leadership role of William Trout, and the shift to the Disciples of Christ around 1842 made a strong impact on the young boy. At the age of eight he listened to a young preacher from Ohio, and later wrote in his family history that this was "the first discourse that my boyish heart fully took in.", the first recognition of the "connected idea of the whole" story of Jesus.[102] The Norval church began to grow in prominence, characterized by "very strict discipline" in member's conduct and a "strong desire to maintain the purity of the witness to the gospel."[103] The Bible was the most honored and central guiding document, not only for each individual member, but for the fledgling church itself. The centrality of the Scriptures as the only true word of God was a main principle of the Disciples, and remained a central principle for William Henry throughout his life.

In addition to providing personal religious guidance, the growing strength of the Norval church coupled with the success of William Trout as a recognized Elder were embedded in the family's social and religious self concepts. Religious life secured a positive role in community life for the Trout family. William Trout was able to rise above the economic failures of his business in great part through his role as a religious leader. The difficulties and setbacks experienced by first generation pioneers often brought despair and hopelessness, contributing to dissolution and social disorganization. The death of a son and the failure of the mill in Esquesing had been a very hard blow to William Trout and the family in general, and could have led to the disintegration of the family. Frontier sectarian movements, however, provided a way to achieve self-worth through the experience of faith, and religious leaders, giving of their time and energy without financial recompense were generally respected in pioneer communities.[104] For William Trout, and for young William Henry, the family's integrity and positive role in community life became integral to the Disciples of Christ cause.

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[99] Butchart, *The Disciples of Christ in Canada*, 289.

[100] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 61.

[101] Brian Boden, *The Disciples and Frontier Religion*, 30.

[102] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 62.

[103] Reuban Butchart, *The Disciples of Christ in Canada,* 391.

After the lease expired on the flourmill in Norval, William Sr. proceeded through a series of work projects; completing the construction of an oatmill, repairing a sawmill with the addition of water wheel and flume, and constructing a distillery. As a recognized religious leader in the community, the questionable moral ramifications of having anything to do with the business of alcohol distillation eventually resulted in William Trout's decision not to "aid or abet this essentially bad business."[105] This too would have an effect on the young William Henry, who took tremendous pride in his extended family free of alcohol abuse and only one or two indulging in tobacco.

William Sr. continued to work on construction contracts, eventually setting up a small shop to work on making horse sleighs and cutters. Once again, disaster struck, the shop caught fire and burned to the ground, throwing the family into bankruptcy. This event was a tremendous blow to William Sr. and Catherine, so soon on the heels of the of the Esquesing financial debt. Once again, however, William Trout's role as religious Elder in the Norval Disciples of Christ church reaped a positive benefit for the family, both emotionally and financially. The congregation took a collection that allowed William Sr. to purchase the most essential tools for a new start in business. William Trout embarked to Toronto, purchased as many tools as he could and by chance learned of a mill construction project in the isolated frontier community of Hurontario on Georgian Bay.[106] Making his way through sixty miles of unsettled forestland to Hurontario, William Sr. worked during the summer of 1844 constructing a sawmill and flourmill. With steady work and favorable prospects, the Trout family moved to Hurontario in the fall of 1845.

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[104] S.D. Clark, "The Religious Sect in Canadian Economic Development" in *The Developing Canadian Community,* 153.

[105] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 61.

[106] Hurontario is now the present day community of Collingwood.

Continuing with his millwright and construction contracts, William Sr. constructed a small mill in Cresemore in 1846 and worked on the Ingles Mill in Owen Sound. In his travels to work on mill contracts, William Trout realized that St.Vincent Township was going through a small economic boom in home and mill construction and showed real promise for steady, lucrative employment. Recognizing the advantages of relocation, William Sr. duly purchased fifty acres approximately three miles north of the little village of Meaford. The Trout family moved to St. Vincent Township in May 1847.

The entire family was pleased with the move, it "suited mother immensely" and provided the beginnings of a workable farm by the beautiful lakeshore.[107] Work was steady, Chantler hired William Sr. to build his mill on the Bighead River, David Layton needed help erecting a small home in Meaford, and John Wilson of Sydenham hired the Trouts to build a large sawmill. William Henry helped his father with all of the construction contracts, learning as he went, investigating and showing great aptitude for mechanical work. Life settled into a regular routine, farm work mixed with millwright and construction contracts kept the Trout family busy and the family prospered.

Soon after arriving in St. Vincent Township, William Sr. looked for an appropriate religious affiliation for the family. Elder McLaren, who had baptized William in Erin was leading a Scotch Baptist congregation at nearby Cape Rich. After attending and listening to several Sunday meetings with the Scotch Baptist congregation, William Sr. could see that the doctrinal differences between his Disciples of Christ principles and the Scotch Baptist creeds were too difficult to bridge. He elected to start his own Disciples meetings in the family home and with this inauspicious start, the Meaford Disciples of Christ came into being.

William's commitment to the small congregation was deep. He was noted as "an enterprising and energetic worker to the cause", bringing many into the fold of the Disciples of Christ church.[108] Through his efforts and those of other key members, the membership increased over the following years and baptism by immersion became a regular occurrence. William Henry recalls many baptisms in the clear cold waters of Georgian Bay, and the regularity of Disciples converts who worked with the family.

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[107] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 84.

[108] Reuban Butchart, *The Disciples of Christ in Canada*, 390.

> Quite frequently men that father hired, or apprentices, became Christians, or if denominationally so, they became Disciples of Christ; it was almost uniformly the case with girls employed by mother, and it was the same with others.[109]

William Trout's work with the Disciples in Meaford was an example of the evangelical nature of the early sectarian movement in Upper Canada, and was in keeping with the spontaneous frontier protest against the creedal divisions within Christianity and the doctrinal control of established churches. William Trout's early work sought to include all Christians regardless of denominational division under the simple straight-forward teachings of the Scriptures. In this simplicity and adherence to the word of God as written in the New Testament, William Sr., and all Disciples leaders for that matter, expected to unite all Christians under the Disciples movement.

Intent and practice however, tend to deviate, even with the best of intentions. William Henry Trout's wording in the *Trout Family History* illustrates the gradual tendency of the Disciples of Christ away from the free sectarian, homespun evangelism towards a church-sect legalistic tradition. In his recounting the Disciples influence in Meaford, William Henry refers to the son of Elder McLaren being "openminded to new settings of the truth" due to the influence of his Disciples wife.[110] He also notes that the Disciples baptism of a young woman, while against her uncle's wishes and resulting in her subsequent removal from his home, was acceptable as she had "the conviction of duty done."[111] Single mindedness to the Disciples "truth" and "duty done" is indicative of the gradual evolution of the spontaneous and democratic frontier sect into a more legalistic denominational structure. The "definiteness and positiveness" of their literal interpretation of the Bible brought about this legalistic tendency.[112] Much later in life, William Henry Trout makes reference to the early individualistic, democratic missionary work giving way to the development of denominationally separate churches. The move towards denominational church structure appears to have lost a great part of the early Campbellian and Disciples democratic fervor of inclusion of all people, regardless of social distinction into classless Christian unity.

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[109] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History*, 91.

[110] Ibid, 92.

[111] Ibid. 90. .

[112] Winifred Garrison, *Religion Follows the Frontier*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1931), 193. quoted in Brian Boden, "The Disciples and Frontier Religion: The Scottish Baptist Roots of the Restoration Movement in 19th Century Ontario" in *The Campbell-Stone Movement in Ontario*, 25.

> Now-a-days this work is done away beyond arm's lengths. Not individualistic, but in the aggregate, by our chosen representatives. Social distinction now cuts off our employees, particularly if they are house workers; a great many ladies don't want their servants to be in the same church with them."[113]

The ultimate failure of religious sects in Upper Canada and the subsequent creation of religious denominations is in great part attributable to the second generation pioneer's increasing wealth, community respectability and accommodation with social organization. The democratic idealism of the first pioneers, with their rejection of old world class structure and adherence to sectarian reformation was lost to the organizing effects of capitalism. "Rarely does a second generation hold the convictions it has inherited with a fervour equal to that of its fathers, who fashioned their convictions in the heat of conflict."[114]

By 1854, the pioneering days and ways were giving way to a more settled and established social and economic context in St. Vincent Township. Merchants, physicians, service industries and laborers all contributed to the social mix of the township and the bustling village of Meaford. The innovative and hardy pioneering spirit of William Sr. had seen the family through difficult years but, as William Henry realized, the increasingly complex industrial age was rapidly gaining momentum and called for greater sophistication in technology. New mechanical invention, better quality iron workings and increased and more efficient output were necessary to stay competitive in the millwright business. [115] The family embarked on the construction of both a saw and flourmill, but with the sawmill in particular, the use of wooden parts to cut down on costs caused frequent breakdowns and discouragement. Through practical necessity, William Henry began to take on ironwork, learning as he went, refitting, tinkering and turning pieces on his home-built lathe for the mill works. In retrospect he shook his head at the inadequacy of his first attempts, but perseverance and a penchant for improvement of any mechanical device eventually won him respect as a practical innovator of mechanical works.[116]

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[113] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 92.

[114] Richard H. Neibuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, (New York: Meridian, 1972), 20, quoted in Brian Boden, "The Disciples and Frontier Religion", 5.

[115] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 94-5.

The Trout family enjoyed increasing economic security and prosperity during the early 1850's. Partially as a result of his increasing financial sturdiness, William Sr. decided in 1854 to send his eldest children for further education to the Hiram Eclectic Institute in Hiram, Ohio. Founded by the Disciples of Christ, the Hiram Institute was dedicated to providing "instruction of youth of both sexes in the various branches of literature and science, especially of moral science based on the facts and precepts of the Holy Scriptures."[117] It was the best school that William Sr. could find for advancing the spiritual education of William Henry, Edward and Mary. It was difficult for the family to give up the help of their eldest, William Henry being twenty-one years of age at the time, Edward twenty, and Mary twenty-four. They were all solid workers in their respective abilities and their absence meant a significantly increased workload for their parents. Nonetheless, the three young adults spent the spring term at Hiram, returning in June from an experience that William Henry considered the "the brightest and best remembered picture in memory's long panorama."[118]

With the economic boom still in full swing, William Sr. purchased two hundred acres of land on the Bighead River with the intent of using the waterpower for a family operated sawmill. The land was one and a half miles upriver from the town of Meaford, but to William Henry on his first visit to the site in June 1855, it could have been isolated from any settlement, so profound was the new green beauty and quiet repose of the little river hollow.

> The leafy vegetation was at its height and every available space seemed filled, and the bird life with its music, in those times so abundant, was at this part of the season only beginning to subside…in this leafy seclusion I wandered around for over two hours without seeing the first sign that any sort of humanity had ever been there before me. It was like an exploration into some unknown wilds, and that was its great charm.[119]

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[116] Ibid. 97.

[117] Peter M. Rinaldo, *Nature, Nurture and Chance: The Lives of William, Edward and Peter Trout,* (New York: DorPete Press, 1998), 22.

[118] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 102.

[119] Ibid, 104.

William Henry began work in Trout Hollow by clearing a small area on the north side of the river where it took a quick loop south and then northeasterly towards Meaford. Development of the hollow was slow and fraught with the usual pioneering setbacks. The cabin roof leaked so much that even the usually reserved Mary rebelled and left until "better conditions prevailed."[120]

Construction of the sawmill on the Bighead River commenced in January 1856. Working with hired laborers through the snowy winter months, William Henry had had the mill up and running by April, and produced lumber at a good price all through the summer of 1856. With an eye to expansion of their family enterprise, William Sr. added a carding machine and fulling mill for the production of wool and cloth. Trout Hollow hummed with industry and the family was pleased with the prospects of the expansion.

In the fall of 1856, Mary, John and Edward once again left Meaford to further their education. Remaining in Meaford, William Henry continued to work at the mill throughout the fall. Although William Sr. needed his eldest son's help with the mill, memory of the positive experiences at the Hiram Institute was too great to resist, and although he "…gave it no thought, and though it seemed hard…", William Henry left in January 1857 to join Mary and John at the Williamsville Academy in New York. [121] Williamsville Academy had recently been built by Disciples of Christ, and provided a similar educational curriculum as the Hiram Institute, therefore fitting the spiritual requirements that the William Sr. felt were so important in the development of his children. William Henry, Mary and John stayed for twenty weeks, returning home in June 1857. During the term, William Henry was encouraged by his teachers to become a preacher with the Disciples movement, and for a time he seriously considered this option as tenable. However, "the home situation compelled me to stand by it so long" he stated, "that I gave up the purpose."[122]

Returning home, William Henry found that the business climate had worsened, "not only locally but generally bad."[123] William Sr. was again in financial trouble, his mill contracts were unpaid due to an economic depression, and he lost on the capital outlay for the mills he constructed. Forced to mortgage his property and declining in health and vigor, William Sr. looked to his sons to gather up the threads of the business and care for the family's interests. William Henry and Edward were his eldest sons, and stepped forward to take on the responsibility of the family. Through their individual efforts in respective endeavors, over time they managed to save the family business and farmstead assets.

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[120] Ibid. 105.

[121] Ibid. 110-11.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Ibid. 116.

There was in both William Henry and Edward a strong and abiding sense of family responsibility that was a key element to their characters and life principles. While Edward, a quiet young man with a penchant for business became a major and greatly respected family benefactor in future years, it was William Henry who helped the family during the lean years of the late 1850's. In these years of financial extremity, William Henry stepped into the breach and did the best he could to shoulder responsibility for the business, the family and the hired help. "When tight times would come, as frequently they did, there were in all three houses of from sixteen to twenty people with only one to look to and that was my humble self."[124]

During the hay season of that very stressful year of 1857, William Sr. had suggested that the family explore the possibility of manufacturing hay rakes to bridge the financial shortfall. William Henry agreed with the concept and immediately began experimenting with the machinery needed to efficiently produce the rake components. Through barter for parts and his own ingenuity, he gradually acquired the necessary machines, and in the spring and early summer of 1858 delivered and sold 3600 rakes to local merchants. The success of this fledgling venture gave incentive to the family business and helped turn the idle winter months into productive and hopeful activity. The payment for the rakes came in groceries and a small amount of extra cash that significantly lightened the problem of subsistence living for the family. The 'trying year of 1857' was weathered, and William Henry had successfully managed to help the family through a very difficult period.

Justifiably happy with his success in starting a "nice little business like the manufacture of rakes, without knowledge of it, or money to meet the cost, simply studying…inventing and making the cheap machinery to accomplish the work", William Henry was optimistic about the future. His penchant to help others in times of crisis he later and unabashedly recalls "was deservedly regarded as no small credible accomplishment."[125] The business continued to meet the family needs and through the years from 1858 to 1861, William Henry continued to improve the mill workings, effectively doubling production capacity and steadily advancing to a point that the business would stand on a solid and permanent footing.

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[124] Ibid, 119.

Unfortunately, it was not to be. The Laycock family creditors, who originally sold the Trout Hollow land to William Sr. asked for final payment on the outstanding balance, a demand the family was unable to meet. The creditors foreclosed and regained possession of the mill property, but allowed William Henry and his partner Charles Jay continued use of the rake manufacturing shop. This arrangement continued form 1861 to 1863, but upon realizing a steady loss operating the sawmill over two years, the Laycock family offered to resell the property to the Trout and Jay partnership. Trout and Jay accepted the terms and duly took on a more efficient and businesslike approach to the Trout Hollow mill endeavor with hopes of long term entrepreneurial success.

Within the scope of English Canadian society during the early to mid-Victorian era, The Trout family were active members of entrepreneurial capitalism; a strong contributor to the growing secularization process, and were respected within the community for their religious and social standing as educated and adaptable tradesmen. They were also, as described in the previous section, active participants within the Protestant religious and cultural transition from a sectarian to denomination church and religious worship structure.

In the fall of 1864, when John and Daniel Muir arrived in Trout Hollow, the Trout family had settled into a routine of work, religious worship, and community interaction through business and Disciples of Christ meetings.

Life in Trout Hollow

> With my brother and sisters John Muir was looked on much the same as if he was a member of the family and was treated in every way as if he was one of the family.[126]
>
> I tell you those days in the hollow were not hollow days.[127]

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[125] Ibid, 120.

[126] Peter Laird Trout, "What I Know About John Muir", 6.

The home that Daniel Jr. and John Muir found in Trout Hollow was providential. "Dan[n]y and I have a pleasant home and do not work hard or long hours..." he wrote to his young sister Mary not long after arriving at the Trout & Jay mill.[128] John Muir easily adjusted to the rhythm of life at the mill site along the Bighead River, and within the first month had settled into a cordial friendship with the young Canadians in Trout Hollow.

In a tiny playful letter, approximately one by two inches in size, John Muir wrote a lighthearted description of life in Trout Hollow to his sister, Mary, intending to put to rest any concerns she may have had about his and Daniel's well-being. Referring to "Our family" Muir clearly indicates an early sense of belonging and having found a home with the residents of the Hollow.[129] It is this sense of belonging, of being welcomed into a group of friends (which I will call the Trout Hollow 'family') that provided a certain amount of security and stability to Muir during a time of great personal unrest and self-questioning.

The relationships that developed in Trout Hollow through working, playing, freedom in religious discussion, scientific debate, disagreement, exchange of ideas and friendship brought a level of openness to Muir's life that he had not previously experienced. While living under the strict confines of his father's religious fervor, free expression of ideas, religious, scientific or otherwise had been actively discouraged. Further, Muir's University of Wisconsin days provided opportunities for the exploration of ideas and science, but the presence of family was missing. In Trout Hollow, Muir found a positive relational mix of friends, freedom of expression, practical hard work, a surrogate 'family', and freedom for botanical study – all this with the added bonus of having his brother, Daniel living and working with him. It is small wonder that his first letter from Trout Hollow was so positive.

With his own brand of unique colloquial humor, Muir introduced his new friends, "Mr. William Trout, an unmarried boy of thirty summers...Charles Jay, a bird of twenty-five, who is said to coo to a Trout...Mary Trout...an unmarried lady of a great many good qualities...and Harriet Trout, a very happy

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[127] *John Muir Papers,* Series IA, file 05376. Letter to John Muir from William Henry Trout, February 13, 1913, Lufkin, Texas.

[128] *John Muir Papers*, Series I A, 00353. Letter from John Muir to Mary Muir, October 23, 1864, Meaford, [Canada].

[129] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Mary Muir, October 23, 1864.

and sportive fish who employs herself in giggling and making giggle for hours at a time…"[130] Muir's perception of his new friends was surprisingly astute, but more importantly, the letter indicates how central the social relations in Trout Hollow were during this period of his life.

Muir's relationships with the Trout Hollow 'family' tell us much about his Canadian period. Along with John and Daniel, the core 'family' included William H. Trout, his business partner Charles Jay, Mary Trout and Harriet Trout. Muir's acquaintances eventually extended to the extended Trout family and their community friends and neighbours. Concentrating first on the key relational elements of Muir's Trout Hollow days, his new found 'family' played not only a collective role in Muir's Canadian experiences, but individual roles as well. With this in mind, a closer look at the relationships between John Muir and his Canadian friends help illuminate his way of thinking, his wishes and feelings, and the nature of his life in the Hollow.

William Henry Trout: 'faithfully your friend'

Marked by mutual liking and respect, the friendship that ensued between William Henry Trout and John Muir lasted a lifetime. William Henry Trout was thirty years of age when he met John Muir, yet his youthful character prompted Muir's playful description of an 'unmarried boy'. Photographs of William in the Trout Family History show an interesting physical similarity to Muir; both young men had keen blue eyes, clean-cut features, and full beards. Both were also lean and wiry, with William describing himself as "moderately tall…lightest of any of my brothers, seldom weighing over one hundred and fifty, often less..."[131] Muir also noted his personal physical stature, writing late in life that "…heavy jobs stopped my growth and earned for me the title 'Runt of the family.'"[132] Although the physical similarities were apparent to some degree, more importantly, John and William shared common interests and in many ways a similar upbringing. "In temperament and parental training between myself and he there was much in common" wrote William in his family history.[133] While William noted that the similarities lay in their mutual interest in nature, interest in astronomy and natural bent for inventive mechanics, he was also quick to point out some key differences as well. He was not a "studious, methodical systematic persistent observer" of nature like Muir, but rather he had "an interested eye" and a certain "close contact with nature and very little else" that a childhood in the Canadian frontier exemplifies.[134] In the study of astronomy both William and John were closer in knowledge, their mutual interest and discussions continuing throughout Muir's eighteen-month stay.[135] It was, however, in the arena of mechanical invention that William H. Trout and John Muir were more evenly matched, and both learned a great deal from the other during Muir's Trout Hollow period.

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[130] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Mary Muir, October, 23, 1864.

[131] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History*, 94

[132] John Muir, "Story of My Boyhood and Youth", in *EWDB*, 92.

From an early age William Henry Trout had been fascinated with the mechanical workings of mills, and with his father's instruction and his own ingenuity, became a competent millwright, carpenter and designer of improvements to mill works. At six years of age, he climbed throughout the workings of the Norval flourmill, the machinery a source of wonder and fascination. William Trout Sr. approved of his son's curiosity, and encouraged William Henry to investigate all aspects of the mill works.

In contrast to the early parental support and instruction William Henry Trout received, John Muir's early natural talent with invention had been a point of contention with his father. Although Daniel Muir Sr. did not disallow his son's youthful interest in mechanical invention, he did not encourage it either.[136] Notwithstanding his father's lack of encouragement, young John fashioned several intricate wooden geared inventions while he was still living on the family farm, showing remarkable inventive genius and personal focus. As Muir noted later, "…it seemed impossible to stop" so consuming was his interest and single-minded purpose to see the mental pictures of his ideas in whittled hickory form.[137] Improvements and efficiency in production, reduction of labor and time saving devices were commendable during the industrial age, and for both Muir and William Henry Trout, a penchant for mechanical invention was a socially acceptable personal vocation.

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[133] Ibid, 124.

[134] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History*.

[135] *John Muir Papers,* Series I A, 09273. Letter from John Muir to Sarah and David Galloway, October 23, 1865, Trout's Mills. It appears that astronomy remained an interest during Muir's Trout Hollow period, so much so he requested "Loomis' University Astronomy" in a letter to his sister and brother-in-law, Sarah and David Galloway.

[136] John Muir, "Story of My Boyhood and Youth" in *EWDB,* 101-102. Aggravated by John's inventiveness, Daniel Muir Sr. told his son that what he is doing is wrong, "…and if you were only half as zealous in the study of religion as you are in contriving and whittling these useless, nonsensical things, it would be infinitely better for you."

William Henry grew into, as he called himself, a "practical mechanic" by benefit of his personal interest, experience and his father's training. He also worked towards innovative solutions by inventing machinery for specific types of mill production, however; after working with Muir during the first winter, he readily admitted that his employee "was a real live inventor…I could not by any means take rank with him…"[138] Working together on the mill expansion, Muir drew up the ideas for machine improvements and then discussed the concepts with William. With the combination of their inventive talents and practical experience, the mill was eventually fitted with an improved self-feeding lathe for turning rake, fork and broom handles, resulting in a daily output of approximately two-thousand five-hundred handles.[139] Describing Muir's work in the mill, William recalled "It required great activity for him to put away the turned handle, and placed (sic) the new one in position during the turning process."[140] From a practical business point of view, the daily output was nearly doubled, and the success of the venture seemed positive. It was, as William noted later, "a delight to see those machines at work."[141]

The influence of Trout and Muir family patriarchs had upon their eldest sons was marked. William Trout Sr. was by far a more benevolent parent than Daniel Muir Sr. Like his father before him, William Trout Sr. was considered a "dignified Christian gentleman" and served as a solid role model for his children. [142] Although the Disciples movement was foundational to his life and he was a committed evangelist, William Trout Sr. never approached the extreme single-minded zealotry that epitomized Daniel Muir Sr.'s strict and uncompromising adherence to Scripture. Although 'Father Trout' had strong beliefs on Christian conduct and the need to follow the word of God as expressed in the Scriptures, his approach was also community and family oriented and provided intervention and help in situations that today would require the aid of social workers.[143] Although he did work on occasion as a traveling evangelist, Daniel Muir Sr. tended to submerge into religious study to the detriment of his family, leaving the hard labor of running the family farm to his eldest son. As John Muir noted, "Father at this period devoted himself entirely to the Bible and did no farm work whatever."[144]

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[137] John Muir, "The Story of My Boyhood and Youth" in *EWDB,* 102.
[138] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 125.

[139] Ibid. 126.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Ibid. 45.

Daniel Muir's zealousness affected not only religious worship, but also systematically forbade music, art, and books that diverged from a strict reading of the Scriptures as the true and only word of God. [145] Not so with the Trout family, where there was open appreciation of the artistic abilities of family members; "the most highly prized by herself and Mary and I, were some water color pictures, drawn and painted by himself".[146] Singing was allowed, (especially 'sublime' hymns), and reading was only restricted by accessibility to books.

Unlike the experience of John Muir, lessons were not 'whipped' into the Trout brood. Education of the eldest Trout children started gently with their mother giving the first lessons in spelling and letters, followed by instruction from their Aunt Harriet. Throughout their young years, the Trout children attended bush schools whenever the limited finances of the pioneer families were sufficient to hire a school teacher. William Henry recalls that the teachers were strict at times, but not unnecessarily so.

> The new teacher was a Scotchman, but speaking perfect English. He had a long rod, but it was used for pointing and other purposes, not for punishment. He was a big man, and could put on a fierce look, or be kindly, as suited. Could scold most witheringly, or be humorous and sarcastic, but always positive; we never misunderstood him.[147]

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[143] Ibid. 60. In Norval, William Trout Sr. intervened to ensure the needy family of a drunken man actually received their grist from the mill, rather than have it diverted to pay for alcohol. In Meaford, the Trout family opened their home to the daughter of a local family in deep domestic distress.

[144] John Muir, "The Story of my Boyhood and Youth" in EWDB, 102.

[145] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, 12.

[146] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 44. William Henry's reference to when his mother retrieved Grandfather Henry George's water color paintings shortly before his death.

[147] Ibid. 73-4.

As they reached young adulthood, advanced education for the eldest Trout siblings was pursued when financially feasible, "Father had always determined that our school education should not be so limited." [148] Support for advanced education for the Trout daughters also indicated a supportive and overall loving home environment for the Trout family siblings.

For Muir, there was no reliable financial support from his father after he left home, and he was directed to depend completely upon his own resources. Managing to find summer employment, Muir financed his University of Wisconsin years, although at times forced to reduce his board to a dollar and a half a week.[149]

Early experience at hard work was a reality of frontier life for both William Henry and John Muir, but the intensity and harshness of these experiences differed between the two boys. Muir's experience on the Wisconsin farm was growth-stunting servitude, "as I was the eldest boy, the greater part of all the hard work of the farm quite naturally fell on me…"[150] William Henry's early work years were also farm related. At nine years of age, he "learned to thresh with a flail, and clear up and winnow out the grain with a fanning mill."[151] Unlike Muir, William Henry's experience as a young boy was not akin to health-destroying child labor, although he did work at many different farm chores. Learning to winnow grain with a fanning mill, William Henry recounts, "…we boys turned the crank and could hold the bags for the grain to be shoveled into them and pitch sheaves down from the mow; the last was fun, but crank turning did not measure up much fun."[152] Harder work was introduced in his early teenage years, and he recounts a harvesting job he and his brother Edward did for an exacting old farmer, "… we learned to reap, but reaping was hard work, to young, growing boys. I could hold up fairly but Ed was not so good."[153]

As with so many children growing up in the Canadian frontier, landscape and animals were integral to William Henry's play and sense of place.

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[148] Ibid, 98.

[149] John Muir, "The Story of my Boyhood and Youth" in *EWDB,* 108.

[150] Ibid. 92.

[151] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History*, 38.

[152] Ibid. 38.

[153] Ibid. 72.

> I, nine years old, could help feed the cattle and do chores and then we would have all the more time for play, with was mainly sliding down hill, digging in the snow, or chasing red squirrels about the barn and fences, or catching the young cattle by the tail to give us a good run."[154]

Early childhood memories of the environmental and farmstead milieu were engraved with clarity in his mind, "…the whole property scene is distinct in my imagination. Were I a landscape painter, I could put it on canvas and it would be an artistic picture."[155] Field and curving stream, magnificent timbered forests with wild deer, catching trout from their grandparent's spring with bare hands to "admire his wiggling beauty" were as much as part of pioneer boyhood as the practical reality of hard work and making an adequate living.[156] It was, however, practical economics and the need to support his family that underscored the life of William Henry Trout, both in Muir's time, and later, with his own young family.

The Trout Family History was written late in William Henry Trout's life, and much of his mature thought colors the recollections. It is apparent that he appreciated the wild beauty of his early Canadian home, "What with hill, and dale, river and fountain, birds and abounding vegetation, it would seem that my irrepressible love of nature would surely be satisfied…It was like an exploration into some unknown wilds, and that was its great charm."[157] It is also interesting to note, in the midst of appreciating the wild beauty of the Hollow he is also drawn to notice the practical, economic attributes of natural commodities. In the paragraph quoted above, he also describes a place in the Bighead River where settlers had been able to remove large fine hearthstones for a farmwife's fireplace, and how to remove the stones with oxen teams and travois. Practicality, commodity and survival - William Henry epitomized the conservative and practical character of the Canadian frontier.

Nevertheless, William Henry intuitively recognizes the difference between an intimate and open relationship to nature and his own forthright pragmatism, and touches on his own ability as "naturalist" in Trout Hollow.

> …a pair of flying squirrels proposed to live with us; and we did not seriously object till they began to take a share of our bread and butter without our leave. Then we had the fun of chasing them one

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[154] Ibid. 38.

[155] Ibid. 54.

[156] Ibid. 37.

[157] Ibid. 104.

> or two evenings, till they left us for quieter quarters. Had I been the true naturalist, like Burroughs or Muir, I would have insisted on our making companions of them, and would have taken up the study of flying squirrels, maybe to the detriment of mill building.[158]

There is a sense of wistfulness about this account, but William Henry was too grounded in the reality of practical economics to follow the uncertainties of being a naturalist. Mill building was his calling, chosen through conscience and duty to family. Even in giving up his dream of becoming a preacher for the Disciples of Christ he maintains a pragmatic, responsible outlook. "I was the oldest son and my father's namesake, so I must stand for his honor and the family interest. My known efficient line of work was mechanics which evidently I must continue."[159]

Pioneer pragmatism and the hard reality of survival may have been an initial requirement of the Muir family on the Fountain Lake farm in Wisconsin, but for Muir, the 'overcarefulness" of the Scots, English and Irish settlers, craving land and independence, "bred endless work and worry."[160] Too much hard stunting farm work, and a lack of balance in his own young life between work and time for study, art and love of nature he felt was a great folly. Although Muir recognized the reasons for this driving need to carve a solid land holding from the wilderness in Wisconsin and in the forested districts of Canada West, he could not condone the loss of health and lives to such denigrating toil. He had worked so hard on the family farm as a duty towards the family and had taken pride in his ability to toil harder than grown men, including his father. Ultimately, out of sheer self-preservation, he rejected the imposition of health-destroying over-work.

Watching William Henry Trout's self-denying adherence to 'conscience and duty', Muir must have recognized the same propensity in himself. Muir also felt a duty to be a useful member of society, working towards a practical contribution, but felt torn between the practical approach and his closely held 'wish' to follow the unpractical avocation of botanical study. In a letter written very late in life to William Henry, it is apparent that during the Trout Hollow days Muir tried to persuade his friend to look farther afield, to follow his dreams and aspirations.

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[158] Ibid.

[159] Ibid. 120.

[160] John Muir, "*The Story of my Boyhood and Youth*", in *EWDB*, 93.

> I only regret you being held so long in mechanical bread winning harness, instead of making enough by middle age & spending the better half of life in studying God's works as I wanted you to do long ago.[161]

For Muir, the harshness of his upbringing, the religious fanaticism of his father coupled with apparent indifference towards excessive child labor made leaving the family farm a necessity. This was not the case with William Henry Trout who had a more benevolent upbringing, with a sympathetic patriarch who encouraged family cohesiveness and responsibility. While Muir felt he had to leave to preserve not only his health but his dreams and aspirations, William Henry felt he had to stay to help not only himself but the extended Trout family. At times, it appears that a life of psychological and emotional hardship breeds an equal and opposite reaction in strong assertion of selfhood.

Within the context of Meaford in the mid 1860's, the Trout family, and the Muir brothers reaped social dividends from their place within the fabric of the community. As sons and daughters of a respected religious elder, and having the distinction of a respectable education, the Trout siblings were well placed within the social hierarchy of their community. When the Muir brothers came to Trout Hollow, they carried with them the same respectable social attributes; education, and a cohesive religious background, and through this, were accorded a similar, if not the same, social standing as the Trout family within the community.

While the similarities in temperament and upbringing between John Muir and William Henry Trout were apparent in their mutual interest in mechanical invention, love of learning, and in their family Scots Disciples foundations. It was the differences that ran deeper, and as will be discussed later in this chapter, that became points of discussion and sometimes disagreement during the day-to-day life of the Trout Hollow group.

Charles Hugh Jay - 'as full of fun and jokes as the pond is of cold water'

In the fall of 1864, Charles Hugh Jay was twenty-five years of age and an integral member of the 'lively lot' of young people in the Hollow. Around 1861, Charles, or "Charlie" and William Henry Trout had pooled their resources and talents to create the Trout & Jay Company for the manufacture of harvest tools.[162] Regarding the nature of his relationship with Charlie Jay, William Henry later wrote they shared "a cordiality and agreeableness that is seldom surpassed between real brothers."[163] Considering the difficulties of setting up a new manufacturing business, and the tenuous nature of making a reasonable living, the bond between the two partners had to have been strong and mutually supportive.

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[161] *John Muir Papers,* Series I A, Reel 20, 11670. Letter from John Muir to William H. Trout, Martinez, May 10, 1912.

Charlie lived and worked in Trout Hollow, sharing the daily successes and trials of running the mill, and enjoying the occasional social and family gathering. Exercising his powers of observation and humor, John Muir's early impression of Charlie was that of a young man "created like a blue-jay, with bristly hair and good-natured and vociferous as any parrot."[164] As an introduction to the Trout Hollow group, the tone of the letter is full of humor, clearly indicating Muir's positive first impressions.

While the friendship between Muir and Charles Jay never reached to same level of intimacy as that with William Henry Trout, Muir appreciated the element of fun that Charlie brought to the day-to-day life in Trout Hollow. It was Charlie who led good-natured morning ribbing when Muir's early rising bed signaled a 'double-shock', and it was Charlie that Muir referred to as "the pinching nit" and often "found guilty of joking."[165] The only reference that there were conversations of a more serious nature between Muir and Charlie Jay is in a letter from William Henry Trout to Muir in 1904. "Charlie referred in his letter, to one night, when you and he were burning slabs till it was quite late, losing sight of the time in a discussion of the nature and conditions of the future state."[166] That Charlie Jay and Muir had such a long discussion on the 'future state', or the nature of spiritual existence after death, indicates that they did exchange thoughts and ideas of personal importance. It also indicates that Charlie most likely joined in the evening table discussions as well. One cannot help but think that a personality as gregarious and irrepressible as Charlie's could ever be left out of any conversation, serious or otherwise.

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[162] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 121.

[163] Ibid. 273.

[164] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Mary Muir, October 23, 1864.

[165] References to Charles Jay may be found throughout the correspondence between the Trout family and John Muir in the years following the Trout Hollow sojourn. "Charlie the pinching nit" was referred to in a letter from Muir to Duncan Stirling. In a newsy, gossipy letter to his brother Daniel, Muir relates that Charlie was "found guilty of joking."

[166] *John Muir Papers,* Series I A, 03379. Letter from William H. Trout to John Muir, June 11, 1904, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

With such an interesting mix of young adults working together and enjoying each other's company, it did not escape Muir's notice that Charlie was romantically interested in young Harriet Trout. While Harriet did not live in the Hollow she was a regular visitor, becoming an integral member of the Trout Hollow group. Speculating on the relationship between Harriet and Charlie, Muir notes that she "will perhaps sometime join affinity to the Jay who whistles and coos and gesticulates so funnily to her."[167] While Muir was certainly aware of the relationship undercurrents between Charlie and Harriet, he reserved the role of a quietly amused bystander, a role he steadfastly retained throughout his Trout Hollow stay. The possibility of any personal romantic affiliation during his Canadian period was fraught with deep emotional ambivalence. On one hand Muir felt a deep need for feminine companionship and understanding, on the other, a deep reticence, if not rejection, to the idea of marriage and domestic responsibility. His relationships with the Trout sisters, and through correspondence with his friend, Emily Pelton, underscore the dichotomy of his feelings regarding feminine companionship. This ambivalence, although at times painful and confusing, added another element to Muir's restlessness and self-questioning during the Trout Hollow period.

The Trout Sisters

Soon after his arrival in Trout Hollow Muir wrote, "Occasionally an extra Trout comes upstream or a brother Jay alights at our door, but they are not of our family."[168] While the Trout Hollow group lived and worked in the secluded little dell upstream from Meaford, they were not isolated from the community. The three youngest Trout sisters, Harriet, Rachel and Margaret regularly came upriver for Saturday social visits.

Harriet Anne Trout was twenty-two years of age in the fall of 1864, and was by far the most gregarious of the Trout sisters. Five and half feet in height with dark hair and neat regular features, and enlivened by a vivacious spirit, Harriet was an attractive young lady. Having recently achieved a first-class Normal School certificate, Harriet was teaching school in Meaford, her energetic and thorough teaching style greatly appreciated and respected within the community. Within the family, natural leadership capabilities combined with a sense of fun made her the instigator of outings and social gatherings. Often, she would bring her younger sisters, friends and fellow teachers to the Hollow, livening up the Saturday afternoons or on occasion, the long golden summer evenings. As her brother William noted, Harriet was rather unique.

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[167] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Mary Muir, October 23, 1864.

[168] Ibid.

> As a girl she was always the liveliest and merriest of any group. In a party of young folks, with a lively mate, there would be no possible chance for dullness. Sprightly thinking and clear, rapid speaking was her regular style, with always a quick sense of the humorous, which would soon be brought to others' notice and enjoyment.[169]

While Harriet was considered the natural leader of the Trout sisters, Mary Trout was the quiet, stabilizing influence in Trout Hollow. The eldest of the Trout Hollow 'family.' Mary was sweet–tempered and kind, an overall "lovable and loving woman" and "dear half-sister" to her siblings.[170] After she assumed the role of house-mother in the Trout Hollow cabin, Mary quietly and efficiently worked at the never-ending round of domestic chores that provided home comforts for the Trout and Muir brothers as well as Charlie Jay. Having had the same opportunities for education as William and Edward, Mary was also a teacher, and would have appreciated the liveliness and variety of debates around the kitchen table. With quiet humor and not a little forbearance, Mary's supportive role was important in providing a sense of security and stability to the Trout Hollow group.

The relationship that developed between Mary Trout and John Muir was more in keeping with Muir's own relationships with his older sisters, Sarah and Margaret. Caring, supportive, and non-judgmental, Muir's sisters had provided an important emotional counter-balance to Muir's estrangement with his father. In Mary Trout, Muir found the same essence of feminine support and kindness, and over time, their relationship became one of mutual respect and friendship. In later letters to John Muir, it is apparent that the friendship was dear to Mary, and that she greatly missed his presence in the Hollow.[171]

The youngest Trout sisters, Rachel and Margaret were occasional visitors to the Hollow. Both girls were studious and attended common school during the time of Muir's stay in Trout Hollow. William

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[169] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History*, 299.

[170] Ibid. 270-71.

[171] *John Muir Papers,* Series I A, Reel 1, 00424. Letter to John Muir from Mary Trout, April 13th, 1866, Hollow. It is also apparent that Muir was fond of Mary as well. In a letter to Daniel written after Muir arrived in Indianapolis, Muir asks Dan to forward a pocket-handkerchief that Mary had given him, indicating that he treasured this small keepsake of their friendship.

Henry Trout described Rachel as being quiet, reflective with constant steady nerve and quiet self-control.[172] While Muir makes no specific reference to these younger sisters, their closeness in age to his own young sisters, Mary, Annie and Joanna would have added to the sense of home and belonging. Muir greatly enjoyed the presence of the young sisters, and was pleased to take them all on botanical excursions, teaching and expounding on the beauties of flowers and ferns. Later, Muir apparently sent letters to Rachel, "the pet" of the family, encouraging her to continue her botanical studies.[173]

Muir's use of botany as a medium through which he could safely relate to his female friends was not unique to his Canadian period, but he certainly used it to good effect with the Trout sisters and their friends. In the role of teacher and guide, he was able to enjoy the company of the feminine while safely keeping deep emotional entanglements at bay. Interestingly, Muir's carefully kept emotional distance appeared to render him unaware of the dynamics of romantic attachment that were brewing under the surface of the Trout Hollow ensemble. It would not be until much later, after his leave-taking from the Hollow that Muir had reason to wonder at his lack of perception on matters of the heart.

Peter Liard Trout

Peter was a younger brother to William Henry Trout, a strong young man twenty-four years of age during the fall of 1864. Having learned a fair amount of practical sawmill work skills from his older brother, Peter was a fairly adept hand at the Trout Hollow mill.[174] Although Muir does not include Peter in his first account of the Trout Hollow 'family', apparently Peter did reside, at least part time, with the others in the Trout Hollow cabin.[175] According to William Henry Trout, Peter was reclusive, read widely, and "dealt with ideas as well as facts, and drew his own settled conclusions without consulting others, and held to them."[176] Reading between the lines of this basically kind brotherly reminiscence, Peter may have been rather opinionated and at times argumentative, which, in view of Muir's own love of a good argument and occasional lack of tact, would have greatly added to the color of the Trout Hollow debates.

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[172] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 301.

[173] Peter Laird Trout, "What I Know About John Muir." See also W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 302. The regard that Rachel had for John Muir became evident later in her life when she named her third daughter, Eva Muir Beach.

[174] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 295.

[175] Peter Laird Trout, "What I Know About John Muir." In his reminiscence, Peter Trout mentions that he was "looking after the sawmill" while William Henry had the "general oversight of everything."

In a close reading Peter Trout's reminiscence, one gets the impression that Peter felt a great deal of respect for Muir, but that there was also an element of competition. Whatever Peter Trout's feelings were regarding Muir, Muir's towards Peter during the Trout Hollow days are obscure. There were no direct references to Peter in Muir's correspondence to family and friends during the Trout Hollow sojourn, nor is he specifically referred to in Muir's later letters to the Trout family. In ascertaining the relationship dynamic in Trout Hollow, perhaps silence speaks the loudest of all.

Day-to-Day Life in Trout Hollow

You know that I loved the peaceful hollow in Canada.[177]

The first winter John Muir lived and worked in Trout Hollow was quite pleasant, regardless of the usual frontier hardships of cold, snow and ice. The Trout Hollow cabin was large enough to afford a separate room upstairs for John and Daniel. After partitioning off the room for privacy, Muir then set to work to reconstruct his "early rising" bed, a contraption indicative of not only a strong ascetic work ethic, but also a sense of humor.[178] Perhaps the most amusing description of the ingeniousness of this particular Muir invention comes from the experience Peter had with the infamous bed.

> After John Muir had been with us about a month he got his famous clock and set it up in a room that he had partitioned off up stairs for himself and his brother Dan. The bed would throw its occupant out at whatever time he set the clock for doing it. The bed was so constructed that the foot would drop down, so that the bed would be in a nearly perpendicular position when the clock unfastened a compound lever that held up the foot of the bed.

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[176] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 294.

[177] *John Muir Papers*, Series I A, Reel 1, 00426. Letter from John Muir to Henry Butler, Indianapolis, Ind., April 22, 1866.

[178] John Muir, "The Story of My Boyhood and Youth", in *EWDB*, 101,110. John Muir constructed the clock that triggered the early rising bed while still living at the family farm in Wisconsin, and the first early rising bed while studying at the University of Wisconsin.

> I slept in it one night…as soon as I got asleep I dreamed that I was climbing a hill and the hill tipped over the top of me and while I was hanging on for life I fell with a crash and found myself out on the floor and this was all the experience I ever had or wanted with John Muir's bed.[179]

It is indicative of Muir's propensity for strict self-discipline that he used the early rising bed every morning without fail. Setting the clock for the "previously determined…unalterably fixed" time of five a.m., a single thump on the floor-boards indicated Muir had landed on his feet without a tumble, a "double-shock" of dropping bed and dropping body was cause for everyone's sleepy amusement.[180] After this regular morning reveille, a chilly wash in the tub, donning work clothes, and a few minutes of reading passed the time before Mary called everyone to breakfast.[181] If the 'double shock' had been profound, John would receive a thorough ribbing at the breakfast table, with Charlie leading the way with fiendish glee.[182]

After a short walk along the pond to the mill-site, Muir would check to see if the water wheel had frozen solid overnight. More often than not, he would have to cut the wheel loose from the ice with a chisel on a long pole, freeing it to power the mill machinery.[183] Helping to build an addition to the rake factory, John and Daniel found that work was not that arduous during the winter of 1864-65. Further, Muir was glad to have Daniel with him; their mutual affection and camaraderie made the days in Trout Hollow seem less removed from the loved ones of their own family.

After learning the mill layout and assembly with William's instruction, Muir worked where he was needed to ensure production of the sawmill and lathe. Timber was cut from the two hundred acres of heavily forested land that William Trout Sr. had originally purchased for the mill-site. After squaring the logs, the sawmill cut dimensional lumber and ensured a supply of wood for the self-feeding lathes that turned out the rake, broom and fork handles.[184] It was physical work for all of the mill workers, setting logs into the cutting frames, storing the cut boards, checking and setting the sawmill and lathe machinery, setting and running the frame for tapering the handles, and then removing and storing the handles in readiness for market. To keep good order and safety around the open machinery, the slabs from the squared timbers, sawdust and discarded wood ends had to be picked up and put on the burn pile.

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[179] Peter Laird Trout, "What I Know About John Muir", 4.

[180] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 127.

[181] Ibid. 127-28.

[182] Ibid. 127.

[183] *John Muir Papers,* Autobiographical fragment, on reserve at the Holt Atherton Archives, University of the Pacific, Stockton, California.

[184] Loris Russell, *Everyday Life in Colonial Canada*, (London: B.T. Batsford, 1973), 143.

At noon break Muir would make short work of the meal, and then devote every spare moment to reading in a quiet corner. There were always 'handy books' and 'a place to turn to' for study.[185] According to William Henry Trout, Muir approached the first winter in Trout Hollow thinking that it would be his only one, and therefore did not follow a regular course of study.[186] While Muir did not focus on a specific course of study, there were many opportunities for discussion and sharing ideas and opinions with the other Trout Hollow members. During meal times, and often in the evenings, Muir's natural abilities for both quick thinking and a quick tongue got a thorough airing. With his usual tact and gift for understatement, William Henry Trout wrote that Muir "gave us pretty freely of the benefit of his fine conversational powers", intimating the regularity and pungency of Muir's contributions to discussion.[187]

The topics of discussion often centred on science, including botany, astronomy and possibly landscape formation, as well as mechanical invention, economics, education, religion and the all-consuming study of nature. These were all fields of interest or strong opinion professed by Muir, and certainly most, if not all, were also of interest to various members of the Trout Hollow family. It was the mixture of opinions and individual aptitudes for thought and argument that made the discussions an important contributing element to Muir's Trout Hollow period. As William Henry Trout recollects, they were all "young lively intelligent people, with common aims and purposes, and yet each with his distinct individuality, which, in discussion, was often decidedly pronounced, but which rarely became ungentlemanly."[188] That the occasional lapse into ungentlemanly conduct occurred should not be surprising in view of the stubborn nature of Muir, and probably more often than not, Peter Trout. Nonetheless, the exchange of ideas, the freedom to discuss wide and varied topics, and the positive contributions of bright young people with relatively good levels of education to the debates resulted in an intellectually stimulating environment for the entire Trout Hollow

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[185] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 128.

[186] Ibid. 124. Hoping that the American Civil War would soon come to an end, it is feasible that both John and Daniel Muir fully expected to return to the United States at some point in 1865.

[187] Ibid. 124.

[188] Ibid. 125.

'family.' For William, the benefits of having Muir in the circle of the Trout Hollow family contributed to quality of their lives.

> If, as Garfield said, that Mark Hopkins and a good student sitting on a log would make a university, so I should think that [with] John Muir, though himself then a student, and others learning and contributing, our log house in the mill hollow might modestly claim the same dignity.[189]

While noon hour breaks in the log cabin university were interesting, work at the mill would continue throughout the afternoon until the evening supper hour. After supper, Muir would once again immerse in study, and unless a conversation held more interest, he would stay with his studies until ten in the evening. If the studies were particularly engrossing, he would often remain up until midnight before climbing the stairs to bed.

While this work-day routine was established during the first winter, Saturdays and Sundays were spent in social and religious pursuits. Coming up the river from the family farm or the schools where they were teachers, the younger Trout sisters, often accompanied by friends, would arrive at the Hollow for a social gathering. During the winter, the visitors would have filled the little cabin with light-hearted fun and conversation. Harriet, with the "peculiar snap" of her personality filled all empty spaces in the conversation with constant social chatter. "Chattie Hattie" as she was dubbed with a mixture of love and exasperation, not only brought Rachel and Margaret with her, but friends from Meaford. Mary Harkus, a fellow teacher and good friend of Harriet's was an occasional visitor and became a friend to both John and Daniel Muir.

In weaving the warp and weft of John Muir's life in Trout Hollow, it is too easy to forget that young Daniel Muir actually established the first bonds of friendship and mutual respect with the Trout Hollow residents and extended Trout family. With his broad laugh and quick wit, Daniel who was "three or four trifles funny" often contributed to the merriment of the Trout Hollow group.[190] He certainly made friends easily with the feminine contingent of the Hollow, with his "fine boyish face and frank open manners"

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[189] Ibid. 125.

[190] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Mary Muir, Meaford, October, 23, 1864.

Daniel found a place in the Trout sisters regard that lasted long after he left the Hollow.[191] Daniel's presence during the first winter also extended the relationship the Muir brothers enjoyed within the Trout Hollow group. He was not as pointed in his criticisms and opinions as Muir tended to be, and was probably easier to get along with overall.

Sunday was a day of worship in which the Trout family invariably participated. Although there is no record from William H. Trout as to how Muir observed the Sabbath, it is suggested in existing letters that Muir attended, at least on occasion, Sunday Disciples of Christ meetings.[192] Peter Trout noted they would lock up the cabin in the morning, attend the Disciples Meeting, and then proceed to the Trout family farm for dinner. [193] At six in the evening, the Trout family would attend the second Disciples meeting, and then return to the Hollow before dark. It is doubtful that Muir remained for the evening meeting. In winter, the return trip in the dark ended with sight of a lamp that Muir would leave in the window, a kindness that Mary Trout later remembered with gratitude.

> John you don't know how we have missed the little star you used to have in the window when we would be coming home after night, and the cheerful fire, but not least missed the pleasant welcome you had for us after being here so long alone.[194]

At some point during the first winter, John and Daniel's brother-in-law, David Galloway, left Wisconsin and came north to join them in Trout Hollow. John Reid and David Galloway, the husbands of Muir's eldest sisters, Margaret and Sarah, having listened to the urgent concern of their families, fled from the latest round of Civil War conscription. In a letter to his sister, Mary, Muir agreed with the decision, "I am sorry that John & David have had to leave home but it is better that they go down to sojourn in this

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[191] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 121. *John Muir Papers*, Series I A. Letter from JM to Daniel Muir Jr., St. Vincent Feb 18, 1866. In this letter John points out to his brother Daniel that although he has been sent letters from Mary Trout, Mary Harkus, Rachel and Harriet Trout, that *"if all of these loving letters from loving girls are really lost you in justice to yourself and them should 'lament in rhyme lament in prose.' "*

[192] In letters from Mary and Harriet Trout, it is apparent that Muir taught Sunday School for local children, indicating he was at the very least present at the Disciples of Christ Church on the Sabbath. Further, Peter Trout indicates that after John and Daniel had obtained good clothing, "we all went together to meeting every Sunday."

[193] Peter Liard Trout, "What I Know About John Muir."

[194] *John Muir Papers,* Series I A, Reel 1, 00424. Letter to John Muir from Mary Trout, Hollow, April 13th, 1866.

American Egypt than to fight American Philistines."[195] Like the Israelites fleeing the tyranny of the Philistines, the decision to retreat to the 'American Egypt' in Upper Canada was morally defensible in Muir's view. Not only was he alleviating the concerns of his young sister, Mary, but justifying his own avoidance of the draft. David Galloway lived and worked in Trout Hollow for the remainder of the winter, welcomed by the Trout Hollow family and content for the time being to work alongside John and Daniel.

Well liked by the Trout Hollow group, David's inclusion into the fold was one more instance of the kindness and hospitality of the Trout family, and another indication of the frontier collective support inherent in Scots clannishness. Later in life, William H. Trout recollected the winter evenings in Trout Hollow as being full of wit and camaraderie.

> These reminiscences bring back so vividly our old table talks, and evening chats, with yourself and Dan, and occasionally David Galloway. There was plain hearty homespun style with some lively wit, for Scotch and half Scotch, and abundance of good nature. I tell you those days in the hollow were not hollow days.[196]

Perhaps in response to David Galloway's presence in Trout Hollow and their conversations recounting day-to-day family life in Wisconsin, Muir's March 5th letter to his sister Mary specifically asks for the minutiae of everyday living in their family home. While playfully providing a nonsensical two-page example of home news he would like to receive, Muir writes, "these small matters which occur in the neighborhood which you do not think worthy of note are still of interest to us when so far from home."[197]

Embedded within the letter is Muir's anxious need to hear that the family is carrying on as normal in the his absence, and letters full of home news would do much to allay those concerns. While fully independent, living and working in Trout Hollow, Muir still feels the ties of responsibility as the eldest son and big brother, for his parents and siblings. Living and working with William Henry Trout, a living model of eldest son shouldering the responsibility of family financial welfare, Muir must have felt a need to help the Muir family. While the American Civil War was one major block to fulfilling that responsibility, the sundering of any tolerable relationship with Daniel Muir Sr. was the greatest hindrance to Muir's direct participation in helping the Muir family at that time. Recognizing these blocks, however, did not remove the sense of responsibility and natural willingness Muir felt to contribute to his family's welfare. These anxious feelings were added to the tumult of restlessness, indecision and searching that characterized Muir's Trout Hollow period.

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[195] *John Muir Papers*, Series I A, Reel 1, 00365. Letter from John Muir to Mary Muir, March 5th, 1865.

[196] *John Muir Papers,* Series IA, Reel 21, 12063. Letter from William H. Trout to John Muir, Lufkin Texas, February 15th, 1913.

[197] Ibid.

At some point in late winter or early spring, Muir approached William Trout and Charlie Jay with a business proposition. If he would be given free rein to make any improvements to the factory machinery to increase output and efficiency, he would be granted half the profits resulting from the improvements within a given period.[198] Trout & Jay agreed, and with Muir drew up a contract for the production of 12,000 rakes and 30,000 turned broom handles. The promise of a reasonable profit for all concerned gave new impetus to the millwork, and Muir quickly began to work on the machinery improvements. For Muir, it was a prudent decision. He needed the money to be free to choose the best, most fitting direction for his life, whether that was following his love of botanical study or fulfilling a useful life in mechanical invention. Muir was in a personal quandary, and the rake and broom handle contract helped to solve it, at least for the time being. Further, Trout Hollow offered a relatively comfortable and secure home with a tolerable social and intellectual environment, somewhat tempering Muir's chronic sense of restlessness and indecision.

In April, 1865 the American Civil War was over. Soon after, Daniel and David returned to the United States, Daniel chafing to work for higher wages in order to finish his schooling, and David glad to return to his family and farm. It had been John Muir's plan to return to the United States with his brother, but he remained to complete the contract agreement with Trout & Jay Company. While Muir was understanding of Daniel and David's need to return, he was unhappy to see them go. Having them in Trout Hollow had been a link with home and family, with them gone, Muir was once again on his own. To combat the sense of loneliness, Muir applied himself with tremendous concentration and energy to fulfilling the rake and broom contract.

Starting with the self-feeding lathe that turned the rake, fork and broom handles, Muir worked to make the lathe machinery an almost completely automatic process. Working with great energy to ensure that the handles were set in place, turned, and then quickly removed, Muir was able to increase the output to eight handles a minute.[199] Recollecting Muir's focus and commitment to creative invention, Peter Trout noted

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[198] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History*, 126.

[199] Ibid. 126.

"the improvements he made in the machinery were simply marvelous", and then followed with an astute observation.[200]

> One writer has said that genius is the capacity for taking infinite pains. If this be true then John Muir must have been a genius for he came nearer to filling that definition than any man I ever knew.[201]

While taking 'infinite pains' to increase the production, the speed of assembly line was slowed by the necessary work of setting and slabbing the round logs, reducing the factory's overall production to twenty-five hundred handles a day. Still, it required tremendous concentration and hard work, and over the course of the spring and summer, production carried on in much the same way, with William working on the top level of the mill, and Muir working his improved lathe machinery on the bottom level.

With the advent of spring, the forest and meadows burst into bloom, the Bighead River sparkled and rushed, freed from jumbled ice blocks and heavy snows. Long northern evenings filled with slanting golden light had Muir leaving his winter book study for the pleasures of botany. Work in the mill was as demanding as ever, but evenings were often spent ambling through adjacent woods and meadows.

> Our tall tall forest trees are now all alive, and the mingled ocean of blossom and leaves, wave and curl, and rise in rounded swells farther and farther away, like the think smoke from a factory chimney. Freshness and beauty – are everywhere, flowers are born every hour – living sunlight is poured over all and everything and creation is glad – our world is indeed a beautiful one…[202]

With the green forests alive with beauty, Muir could not contain himself, he simply had to share the experience of flowers and forests with his friends. The Saturday social visits began to include botanical walks, with Muir leading a covey of Trout sisters and their friends, such as Mary Harcus. Pouring over Wood's Botany and filling herbariums, Muir's enthusiasm was contagious. Planting a flower garden outside the cabin, the Trout Hollow family filled it with daisies, tulips, common cowslip, thyme, several kinds of phlox, hyacinth, crocus and other common flowers.[203] In their rambles, Muir introduced his little band of weekend botanists to the fascinating complexities of liverworts, mosses, lichens and ferns.[204] Making a little furrow in a patch of wild thyme to release the scent, and sharing his special fondness for a favorite, the little Mary Ann daisy, Muir's love of nature captivated his friends. While the flower rambles were a way Muir could enjoy the company of his female friends without succumbing to his 'slavish fear' of deeper emotional ties, they also addressed a need to share the beauty of creation with others. In Wisconsin, he had enjoyed flower walks with his friend, Emily Pelton, but the botanical forays in Trout Hollow show Muir's first concerted effort to truly teach and impart the beauty of creation to people through botanical study.

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[200] Peter Liard Trout, "What I Know About John Muir."

[201] Ibid.

[202] *John Muir Papers,* Series I A, Reel 1, 00368. Letter from John Muir to Emily Pelton, near Meaford, May 23, 1865,

[203] Ibid.

Muir's skill and enthusiasm for teaching were not restricted to the occasional botanical jaunts with friends. At some point he was persuaded to instruct a regular class of Sunday School at the Disciples of Christ Church in Meaford. Muir's love of children was undeniable. His earlier friendships with young Ally Carr and Henry Butler, both sons of his University of Wisconsin professors, Ezra Carr and James Butler, as well as his love and deep concern for little Fanny Pelton all indicate a deep affinity with young children. The Sunday School class in Meaford provided Muir with a way of interacting and enjoying the energy and enthusiasm of youngsters, however; he instructed in his own way. Part book lesson, part naturalist foray, Muir took the children out into the woods to see for themselves God's great handiwork.

In bringing the Sunday School children and his Trout Hollow friends on these botanical excursions, Muir was, in fact, following an accepted practice of teaching science and theology through the study of natural history. As part of the early Victorian naturalist tradition of accumulating collections and information , Muir's forays were part of a widely disseminated and egalitarian practice meant to widen the appeal of natural science.[205] The combination of healthy exercise, scientific learning and the pleasures of socialization added to the general positive reception of the natural history excursion, and fit the Protestant work ethic that even leisure time must be spent in some productive endeavor. Through Muir's natural enthusiasm and love of nature gained a loyal following, and Sunday School became something to look forward to.[206]

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[204] References to the plants Muir studied during the Trout Hollow period are scattered throughout letters to and from Harriet and Mary Trout, Mary Harkus, Emily Pelton and Jeanne Carr. While Muir's brother Daniel is the notable exception, Muir appears to keep botany and the beauty of flowers to the circle of his feminine friendships.

[205] Carl Berger, *Science, God and Nature in Victorian Canada, 17.*

Muir's approach to Sunday School also signaled his personal rejection of religious orthodoxy and dislike of the increasing legalistic bent of the Disciples of Christ Church. Muir's personal relationship with the divine was finding greater realization through immersion in the beauty and complexity of nature. Clean, straight forward, personal, immediate, Muir's way to a relationship with God was more in line with the original intent of the Campbellite movement – independent relationship of lay people with God through the word of God in the Scriptures. For Muir, the word of God was more and more clearly read in the beauty of nature, the shifting perspectives and prejudices of evolving church doctrine and creeds were simply muddying the waters of a profoundly personal relationship with the divine.

It is not too much to say that during Muir's Trout Hollow period he truly began to assert his own religious independence. Muir was not sparing in his criticism of the Trout's religious assertions. In a letter to Daniel, written during Muir's second winter in Trout Hollow, he clearly states that he has disagreed with the Trout's religious position for some time, including the period Daniel also lived in Trout Hollow. "I agree with the Trouts on religious matters as badly as ever but do not scold so frequently."[207] That Muir frequently chided the Trouts regarding the orthodoxy of their church is indicative of his independent search for a more fitting relationship with God. Muir's rejection of conventional Disciples doctrine coincided with the shift from sectarian evangelism towards the inevitable denominationalism of an established church. The result of this shift tended to bring about what Muir called 'hard shells'—an implacable righteous certainty on religious matters that he abhorred in his father and in others.

While William H. Trout in the years following the Trout Hollow period adopted a more liberal approach to religious beliefs, at the time of Muir's Canadian sojourn he was as 'hard-shelled' as his Disciples brethren. Writing in his family history later in life, William is candid regarding the tendency towards narrow-mindedness within the Meaford Disciples congregation.

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[206] An indication of Muir's popularity with the Sunday School class is found in later letters from Mary and Harriet Trout. See *John Muir Papers,* Letter to John Muir from Mary Trout, April 13, 1866. "The books you left and the remembrance you sent seemed very grateful to them, they looked very tickled." See also *John Muir Papers,* Letter from Harriet Trout to John Muir, May 10th, 1866. "I told your S.S. class you did not forget them, and they all looked up as tickled as could be."

[207] *John Muir Papers,* Series I A, Reel 1, 00414. Letter to Daniel Muir from John Muir, February 18, 1866. (Note: this letter is listed in *John Muir Papers* as a letter from John Muir to David Muir, dated February 28th, 1866. The letter is actually to Daniel Muir, dated February 18th, 1866. The mill fire that destroyed the Trout Mill occurred on February 22, 1866. As there is no reference to this critical event in the letter, it must have been written February 18th, rather than the 28th.)

> I could see that while our brethren had better defined and more correct views of New Testament teaching and practice, still we did not compass the whole of it. For that matter no one does, nor does any body of people; but our brethren of the Meaford church seemed to think they had it down fine. In the meaning of a passage, or combination of passages, they regarded their conclusions as the absolute truth in the case, from which there could be no appeal, and I shared largely in their views with them.[208]

With certainty of religious teaching and practice and the conviction of 'absolute truth', William Trout would most likely have been a recipient of Muir's 'scolding' on religious matters. And William would not have been alone at the sharp end of Muir's tongue, as a staunch Disciple, Charlie Jay was also adamant regarding the Disciples infallibility in religious truth. Charlie's uncompromising views later caused the only rifts in his lifetime relationship with William Henry Trout, apparently receding "…into the old, still more narrowed position" of the church, while William "expanded into a wider one."[209] Between William Henry Trout and Charlie Jay, and most probably the opinionated young Peter Trout, Muir would have faced a fair amount of resistance to his questioning of denominational dogma. Peter Trout later referred to Muir's 'preaching' on religious matters, intimating how he was received at the time.

> …he swang (sic) his arms around and acted as though he was terribly in earnest or acted as though he was reciting Shakespeare which was about all there was in his sermons.[210]

While William Henry Trout may have had reason to take issue with Muir's scolding on religious matters, his reminiscence of Muir's religious direction was decidedly kinder than that of Peter Trout.

> Though ardently devoted to science, as well as the study of nature, yet the agnostic tendencies that had their beginning about that time found no sympathy with him. With him there was no dark chilly reasoning that chance and the survival of the fittest accounted for all things. On the contrary, that God "cared for the sparrow of the air and the lilies of the field," was something that his kindly nature could most readily understand and heartily appreciate. He examined nature with a lover's eye, and he saw not only an All-Creator, but an All-Father and Protector.[211]

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[208] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 273.

[209] Ibid. 274. Charlie Jay eventually became an Elder in the Meaford Disciples of Christ Church.

[210] Peter Liard Trout, "What I Know About John Muir." While Peter Trout is describing to Muir's preaching to the Indians in Alaska, he is actually using his personal experience of Muir's 'preaching' from the Trout Hollow period.

[211] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 124.

In this recollection, William may well have been drawing from a lifetime of knowing Muir, however, all of which he refers to was manifested in Muir's religious outlook during the Trout Hollow period. Devotion to science, and especially the study of nature characterized Muir's Canadian period. Agnosticism was not an option for Muir; God was both inherent in the flowers and winds—the All-Father and Protector, and apparent in the process of creation—the All-Creator.

Writing to his friend, Emily Pelton in May, Muir's independent religious thought and questioning of orthodoxy during this period is apparent.

> …I was just thinking on going to church last sabbath [Sabbath] that I would hardly accept of a free ticket to the moon or to Venus or any other world, for fear it might not be so good and so fraught with the glory of the Creator as our own – those miserable hymns such as these
> "This world is all a fleeting show
> For Man's delusion given"
> do not correspond with my likings and I'm sure they do not with yours.[212]

Muir's rejection of the idea that Creation was simply a fleeting template of delusion falls squarely with his growing inability to accept the idea of separation between man and nature. Creation was not just a fleeting show; it entailed "glorious manifestations of Creative Skill" which Muir wanted to share with Emily through botanical rambles.[213]

So we see that during this period, Muir was searching for a way to express his growing conviction that orthodox religion did not fit his personal evolving worldview. Again and again, Muir returns to nature for clarification and assurance. Through using botany as a vehicle of immersion in nature and learning to trust his own instincts and experiences rather than religious creeds, he was gradually evolving into his own unique, individual relationship with the Creator and Creation.

Added to Muir's growing independent thought regarding religion, the spring and summer of 1865 found him struggling to come to terms with the emotional entanglements of romantic interest, and the social expectation of marriage. Muir's letter to his friend, Emily Pelton in May is quite important, for it marks elements that contribute to a period of profound transition not only in religious outlook, but Muir's confusion regarding his relationship with her. Muir was of two minds regarding his friendship with Emily. While the relationship had earlier sparked speculation within his family that Muir and Emily Pelton would eventually marry, distance and Muir's own restlessness, confusion and indecision regarding what he wanted to do in his life began to widen the emotional gulf between them.[214]

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[212] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Emily Pelton, May 23, 1865.

[213] Ibid.

In his May 1865 letter to Emily, Muir is full of impatience at not hearing from her and a worried fear over possible reasons for her silence. "I have been seeking a reason for your unwonted silence, but whether it proceeds from your being sick, or married, or crazy, or angry, I could not decide, I surely did not forget to send my address."[215] By placing marriage in the midst of a series of negative reasons for her silence Muir was intimating a lot about his own feelings regarding the idea of wedlock. In letters to his brother Daniel and sister Mary, both before and soon after Muir's Canadian period, Muir often uses Daniel's earlier term 'slavish fear' to describe his deep personal reticence and need to avoid the ties of responsibility and duty that come with romantic relationships and ultimately, marriage.[216] Being a slave implies a complete loss of freedom, of individual will and opportunity to fulfill personal dreams and desires equated, in this case, with wedlock and eventual family responsibilities. For Muir, this brought out a complex dichotomy of feelings, for while he acknowledged his love of home, loved and enjoyed children and deeply cherished family life, at the same time he had a deep and abiding need to address his own love of botany and the exploration of nature.

Muir's ambivalence to marriage was also tied to the concept of duty, whether Christian duty as espoused by religious convention, or duty to another within marriage. Tellingly, the next paragraph in Muir's letter to Emily recounts the traditional rewards of 'duty', but there is a strange mixed undercurrent of both lovers' pique and regret. Pique at the surety of Emily finding 'good friends' (including presumably other romantic interests), and regret, that the hope of their own budding romantic relationship was gone forever.

> I sincerely trust – Emily that you are well and happy in enjoyment of good friends and of these blessings so plentifully bestowed upon all those who love duty. I often think that perhaps you may feel something of lonesomeness at times when all is still and thought follows thought in a long retrospect of friends, and hopes gone forever, – but I am sure that you can never be without

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[214] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, 63.

[215] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Emily Pelton, near Meaford, May 23rd, 1865.

[216] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Daniel Muir, Old Fountain Lake, Dec. 20th, 1863. "Dan, you & I must not on any account permit ourselves to think of marriage for five or six years yet, and I give this as a very grave hint, for if you permit yourself to fall in love adieu to study." Letter from John Muir to Daniel Muir, Indianapolis, Ind., May 7th, 1866. Muir tells Dan that he is hesitant to accept an invitation to meet a lady friend of Dr. Butler's because of "some of that slavish fear that you speak of..."

> friends, and those who in the fear of God seek to perform every duty possess abiding happiness in all the relations of life.[217]

It is indicative of Muir's search for some sort of resolution to the indecision and restlessness of his time in Canada that he struggled with the question of duty, not only within the context of conventional Christian duty, but duty to family, duty to society and duty within marriage.

For Muir, duty was equated with some of the most negative aspects of his life. Duty to his family had him bound to health-destroying labor on the family farm longer than was necessary, duty had led the valiant and naïve young men in Camp Randall to the carnage of the Civil War, and in matters of religion, duty to the church restricted independent religious thought. By the time he was working and living in Trout Hollow, the concept of duty had become for John Muir a life-limiting imposition on following one's truest and deepest hopes and dreams.

Realizing that Emily would not suffer from want of friends, Muir draws attention to his own lonely state, "…poor me is left in Canada, farther from home and longer from home than me ever was before."[218] This is followed with an assurance to Emily that living in Trout Hollow does not allow many social contacts, and that for his part, he does not try to extend his acquaintance with others. While this, in view of Muir's life in Trout Hollow, was patently untrue, for Muir it was a way to insure Emily's sympathy and to retain the relationship. Reverting to how he felt most comfortable in relating to women, Muir wishes that Emily were near enough that they could once again enjoy the occasional botanical ramble. As with the Trout sisters, the study and enjoyment of botany provided the medium in which friendship could flourish, and Muir's 'slavish fear' could be held in abeyance.

While Muir, for his own reasons, may have led Emily to believe that his social acquaintances were few and that he led an isolated life in Trout Hollow, in reality he had many acquaintances in the community. As the Trout family was fully integrated into the community of Meaford through business, religious and social contexts, it is not surprising that they included Muir in aspects of community life. From later letters, it is apparent that Muir was well aware of the dramas, highlights, successes and failures of many people in the community, mainly as a result of being close to the Trout Hollow family and their community acquaintances. Further, he met people through Disciples meetings, and occasionally on his own while on personal errands in the community.

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[217] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Emily Pelton, May 23, 1865.
[218] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Emily Pelton, near Meaford, May 23, 1865.

In a letter to one of his Meaford friends, Duncan Stirling, it is clear that Muir's friendships were not restricted to the Trout Hollow group, "Very best regards to your father and John & Alex and Topsy and [indipherable] & James and family and all the rest. Tell my friends that I am coming within twenty years to see them"[219] Muir's relationship with the Stirling family is not surprising, as the Trout and Stirling families had been close friends for many years, and through church and social relations became friends to Muir as well.[220]

John Muir may not have met Duncan Stirling until the late fall or winter of 1865.[221] Born in 1842 in Quebec, Duncan Stirling was a friend of the younger members of the Trout family and a committed member of the Meaford Disciples of Christ. At the time of Muir's Trout Hollow stay, Duncan was a quiet, intelligent young man in his early twenties, and severely plagued by chronic ill health. He did, however, manage to work on at least one occasion with Muir at the Trout Hollow mill. Muir later reminisced in a letter to Duncan about their "exployets (sic) at the lathe when Charlie the pinching nit made fun of our turning and told us to work together on the same hub, one with the gouge the other with the chisel."[222] Fun in the mill works was, as William Henry stated, "caught on the fly", but helped lay the groundwork for life-long friendships.[223]

Muir's extended community acquaintances were also apparent in a chatty, newsy account of Meaford social life sent to his brother Daniel in February 1866.[224] Muir lists events in a rather perfunctory fashion, noting the marriage of Mary Ann Whitelaw and Hugh Young, Duncan Stirling's return to Meaford, Mr.

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[219] Ibid.

[220] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 299.

[221] *John Muir Papers* Letter from John Muir to Daniel Muir, St. Vincent, February 18th, 1866. In this newsy letter, Muir mentions that Duncan has returned home, but there is no date as to when Duncan left or returned to Meaford. Further, Muir does not mention him until the very end of his Canadian period, suggesting that the friendship developed in the winter of 1865-66.

[222] "The John Muir Letters to his Meaford Friends", Letter from John Muir to Duncan Stirling, July 1st, 1866. Letters the property of the Meaford Museum, Meaford, Ontario.

[223] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 127.

[224] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Daniel Muir, St. Vincent, Feb. 18th, 1866.

Trout Sr.'s illness, the flight of the Spratford family from Mr. Spratford, and the joining (most probably baptism) of Anna Layton and Maggie Trout to the Disciples Church.[225] The Layton family appear to have been of special interest for Muir, for in later letters to Duncan Sterling, Muir twice made reference to young William Layton, son of the Layton family from whom the Trout family had earlier purchased the Trout Hollow land.[226] The young boy obviously had a special place in Muir's regard, "I wish you would measure young Wm. Laycock for me from time to time and report to me" he wrote to Duncan, adding "Tell him I want him to come to the states when he is a man."[227] Although most of these peripheral friendships and acquaintances did not stand the test of time and distance, the essence of community life in Meaford was familiar to Muir. John Muir, it appears, far from 'not seeking to extend his acquaintance' was not unconnected or oblivious to community life.

While the human community offered social contact, the community of nature provided never-ending options for study and learning. Although botany was Muir's focus during his sojourn in Canada West, incidents involving animals, birds and insects offer an interesting glimpse into Muir's growing empathy and identification with living creatures.

As described earlier in this chapter, Muir's encounter with the wolf pack near Lake Ontario elicited a deep ambivalence, if not fear. Muir's feelings about predators and their role in the order of nature is instructive within the spectrum of his Canadian wildlife experience, as we see from three other vignettes of Anna and Joanna in December 1865, Muir tells them a tale of the house cat and a bird – a story obviously meant for their amusement, but also providing an interesting picture of a tension between Muir's empathy for small prey creatures, his interference in a predator-prey relationship, and the unhappy outcome of that interference.

> One Sunday I returned from meeting before the rest when a little bird flew into the house and the cat caught it. I chased the cat out of the house, and through the house, till I caught her, to save the birds life, but she would not let go, and I choked her and choked her to make her let it go until I choked her to death, though I did not mean to, and they both lay dead upon the floor. I waited to see if she would not receive back one of her nine lives, but to my grief I found that I had taken them all…Charley Jay, who is as full of wit and jokes

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[225] Ibid.

[226] "The John Muir Letters to his Meaford Friends", Letter from John Muir to Duncan Stirling, Indianapolis, July 1st, 1866, and Yosemite, January 30th, 1870.

[227] "The John Muir Letters to his Meaford Friends", Letter from John Muir to Duncan Stirling, Indianapolis, July7 1st, 1866. Letters the property of the Meaford Museum, Meaford, Ontario.

> as the pond was of cold water one night, said "Now John is always scolding us about killing spiders and flies but when we are away he chokes the cats," and they kept saying "poor kitty," "poor puss," for weeks afterward to make me laugh.[228]

Muir's grief in finding that he had killed the cat was sincere. His overzealous rescue attempt to intervene in the bird's fate had ended badly, in trying to save one life he participated in the loss of two. Although he understood the cat to be a predator, Muir was unable, in this instance, to separate his empathy for the songbird from the predator/prey relationship. That Muir defended the lives of spiders and flies during this period also suggests an empathy with the small buzzing and creeping lives. As Peter Trout later noted, "John would not kill anything."[229] It appears that Muir simply reacted from an empathic sense that these small, seemingly insignificant living creatures should not be arbitrarily extinguished, that there was a place in nature for them and as such they should be left alone. His persistence in attempting to free the bird from the cat is also indicative of his love of birds, a feeling that he carried from his Scottish childhood and throughout his boyhood in Wisconsin.[230]

It is interesting that the motivation for Muir's actions in the cat and bird incident did not remain consistent during the Canadian period. The impetus to save the bird, spiders and flies are all born of empathy for small, supposedly defenseless creatures. Muir later recounted an experience that he shared with Hugh Jay and William H. Trout in dealing with a family of raccoons at the Trout Hollow mill. In this short account, Muir's feelings and actions indicate that the life-reverence for all creatures that he later advocated was not consistent during his Canadian period, for his treatment of the raccoons shows little of the empathy he manifested for the bird, or the spiders and flies.

> One day I saw an old mother coon crossing the millrace on a slim foot log followed by her family of half a dozen, half-grown, all walking behind her in a straight row as if keeping step. I called

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[228] *John Muir Papers,* letter from John Muir to Mary, Anna and Joanna Muir, Trout's Hollow, C.W., December 24, 1865.

[229] Peter Liard Trout, "What I Know About John Muir."

[230] John Muir, "The Story of my Boyhood and Youth" in *EWDB.* In this autobiographical account, Muir devotes a significant amount of text to descriptions of the birds in Scotland and Wisconsin. Birds were integral to Muir's first experiences in nature, as the small band of Scottish boys would hunt nests and listen to the "delicious melody, sweet clear and strong" of the skylarks. Muir early experience of empathy for the plight of young unfledged robins stolen from their nest by a soldier made a deep impact, "how my heart fairly ached and choked me" he later recalled. 35.

> Mr. Jay and Mr. Trout, owners of the mill, to come and catch this fine crop of coons. This was not effected without considerable danger of being bitten because when grabbed by the neck they could turn up and bite. We ran with our arms full and dropped them one by one into an empty sugar barrel that stood by the log house. Finding they could not get out and were a good deal in each other's way they quarreled, each evidently blaming the other for their inconvenience and misery. Such a growling and caterwauling of coons could hardly have been surpassed by an equal number of wild cats, and I have oftentimes thought since that in crowded communities or in crowded homes there is apt to be the same quarrelsome faultfinding and unrest though perhaps not quite so violently and bloodily expressed. It always seemed to me that coons were very serious animals. I never saw anything in the way of playful fun in them. Perhaps, however, because I did not know them better, since they lie hidden nearly all day in hollow trees and seldom go abroad before dusk.[231]

Why the dichotomy in attitude as manifested through his actions to rescue the bird, in contrast to the raccoon family incident? As a young boy in Scotland, and later in Wisconsin, Muir hunted birds and small animals. "All hale, red-blooded boys are savage, the best and boldest of the savagest, fond of hunting and fishing" he wrote of his childhood pursuits, but then adds "…when thoughtless childhood is past, the best rise the highest above all this bloody flesh and sport business, the wild foundational animal dying out day by day, as divine uplifting, transfiguring charity grows in."[232] Was Muir going through a 'transfiguring' shift in his outlook towards hunting and fishing, and animals in general in Canada? That there were two incidents dealing with living creatures, seemingly at odds with each other in their impetus, suggests Muir was working through an ethical evolutionary process during this period of his life. His experiences in Canada provided the context for a wide spectrum of reaction in keeping with an evolving ethical self, and he was still grappling with the "wild foundational animal" within, working towards the 'divine' and 'uplifting charity' of a biocentric ethic fully realized and lived.

Muir wrote the raccoon vignette much later in his life, intending to include it in the second volume of his autobiography.[233] What is perhaps most indicative of Muir's inconsistency in outlook is that it was he who instigated the capture of the raccoon family, something that he would not have done in later years. Further, the violent bloody mayhem in the sugar barrel apparently elicits little empathy for the raccoon family. Interestingly, Muir only ties the animal's obvious misery to the human social condition of overcrowding.

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[231] *John Muir Papers,* Series III C, accession number 08432. Autobiographical fragment.

[232] John Muir, "The Story of my Boyhood and Youth", in *EWDB,* 80.

[233] *John Muir Papers,* Series III C, accession number 08432, dated [ca. 1913-1914]. Autobiographical fragment.

In looking at all of the known Canadian experiences with wildlife, it appears that Muir was going through a transitional period in the evolution of his own biocentric ethic. There was a dichotomy of ethical approaches, one underpinned by a deep ambivalence towards certain animals, especially predators, the other subject to deep empathy for the small, apparently defenceless creatures. It would not be until Muir's thousand-mile walk to the Gulf of Mexico in 1867 that Muir included predators into a fully integrated biocentric ethic.[234] Nonetheless, the Canadian experiences indicate a contribution to the process of 'transfiguring charity', and a willingness to stand up to his peer group (at least with the spiders and flies) in defence of his growing empathy with living beings.

Throughout the summer and into the fall of 1865, Muir continued to work in the Trout Hollow mill, following the now routine unfolding of long work days, quiet summer evenings talking, reading or botanizing, and Sundays combining botanical walks with his Sunday School class with meetings at the Disciples of Christ church. The long hours and constant work in the mill, although challenging with endless inventive possibilities, began to eat away at Muir's emotional and physical health. Writing to his sister Sarah in October, he was exhausted, "I have to do two or three times as much as I should – enough to set one crazy but my heart is with my toil and though not in robust health I make out to keep above water."[235] Muir also found his penchant for invention to be at the heart of a growing personal dilemma "…it seems I should be dragged into machinery whether I would or no – for the last three or four months I have been inventing machinery about 24 hours a day."[236]

Adding to complexity of Muir's increasingly ambivalent feelings regarding machinery work was his emotional distancing from Emily Pelton. While Muir's letter to Emily in May, 1865 was full of confused longing, impatience, and pique in an attempt to gain Emily's sympathy, over the course of the summer and early fall Muir's approach to the relationship altered. While still friendly, Muir becomes more emotionally removed, preferring to stay within the safe confines of their interest in botany and mutual friends.[237] While time and personal introspection may have played a part in Muir's change of tone towards Emily, it is interesting to note that at some point during the summer, John Muir began his life-long correspondence with his friend from the University of Wisconsin days, Jeanne Carr. It would be Muir's relationship with Mrs. Carr that would help him to explore the internal conflicts and restlessness regarding vocation and avocation. More importantly, Mrs. Carr provided a caring and supportive mentor, a kind and intelligent woman who would both acknowledge and support Muir's individual spiritual development and relationship through and with nature.[238]

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[234] John Muir, "Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf", in *EWDB*, 148. Stating unequivocally that it is man's "ignorance and weakness" that foster antipathy towards feared predators, including alligators and snakes, Muir makes an impassioned defence for all creatures.

[235] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from JM to David and Sarah Galloway, October 23, 1865.

[236] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from JM to Emily Pelton, November 12th, 1865.

Guides and Mentors – Alexander von Humboldt and Jeanne Carr

Although the first letter of their life long correspondence is missing, at some point during the summer of 1865, Jeanne C. Carr, the wife of one of Muir's University of Wisconsin professors wrote to Muir during his stay in Upper Canada.[239] It was the beginning of a spiritually and intellectually important relationship for both of them.

Although Muir first met Mrs. Carr in 1860 at the Wisconsin State Agricultural Fair, it was after Muir became a student of Professor Ezra Carr at the University of Wisconsin that Mrs. Carr began to invite him to the family home for occasional visits.[240] Mrs. Carr saw in Muir not only a student with whom to share her great interest in botany, but an acceptable Christian role model for her two young sons. Mrs. Carr's Christian faith, devotion to her family, and love of botany appealed to Muir, and he greatly respected and appreciated her encouragement of his growing interest in botanical study. The student – mentor relationship between Muir and Mrs. Carr may have had its beginning in Madison, but did not truly start to bloom until their first exchange of letters while Muir was working and living in Trout Hollow.

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[237] Ibid.

[238] Steven J. Holmes, *The Young John Muir: An Environmental Biography*, 127-28. Holmes notes that Jeanne Carr filled the role of friend and mentor without "raising the difficult emotional and practical issue of marriage." For Muir, this would have helped alleviate the troubling emotional implications of a continued relationship with Emily Pelton.

[239] Stephen Fox, *The American Conservation Movement,* 45. Fox mentions that earlier in the summer of 1865, Jeanne Carr responded to a letter Muir had actually penned to her husband, Professor Ezra Carr, thus marking the beginning of their lifelong correspondence.

[240] Gisel, Bonnie J., "Spiritual Intimacy: John Muir and Jeanne C. Carr" in *John Muir in Historical Perspective,* Sally M. Miller, ed., 35.

In Jeanne Carr, Muir not only found a knowledgeable amateur botanist with a deep and abiding affinity for nature, but a kindred spirit who nurtured his foundational need for deep and significant communion in nature.[241] Encouraged by her warm understanding and support, Muir began to write of emotions and experiences that he could not easily share with others, including his Trout Hollow friends.

Despite the mutual friendship and respect Muir had with the Trout Hollow family, he may not have felt he could share his deepest personal doubts and rather nebulous hopes and dreams with them. The practical necessity of making the mill turn a profit, the limitations on advanced education in the frontier, and resistance to spiritual ideas other than Disciples doctrine may all have contributed to Muir's inability to openly voice his doubts and dreams. As William Henry Trout recounted, while they endeavored to understand Muir, "It was easy to admire, but to understand and appreciate him required some knowledge of the subject matter of his studies and his modes of thought."[242] Although William Henry Trout may have understood and been sympathetic to Muir's dilemma if given the opportunity, he had already relinquished his own dream of advanced education and of becoming a minister in order to financially support the Trout family. Dreams and doubts are all well and fine in the Canadian frontier, but the practical necessity of food on the table took precedence. If Muir had ever shared his deepest aspirations and thoughts, William would most likely have counseled prudence and encouraged the practical use of Muir's natural inventive talents.

In a late life retrospect, Muir viewed these days as being filled with indecision and confusion regarding a fitting vocation, with his inability to make a choice leaving him to defer the decision indefinitely.

> A few friends kindly watched my choice of the half dozen old ways in which all good boys are supposed to walk. "Young man," they said, "choose your profession – Doctor, Lawyer, Minister?"
> "No, not just yet," I said.[243]

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[241] Ibid, 36.

[242] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 124.

[243] Robert Engberg and Donald Wesling, eds., *John Muir - to Yosemite and Beyond,* Autobiographical fragment, 27.

The long days of mechanical invention and mind-dulling repetitive mill-work wore at Muir, the doubts and desires of his heart beat at the door of indecision. Was this all there was to his life? Yes, he was 'on' the world, working at the mill, becoming known in the community, living with friends, but it all felt somehow superficial, lacking a sense of truly being at home with himself and with nature. He was not, however, 'in' the world; not fully integrated into nature and his own dearly held dreams, a problem compounded by the practical necessity of work. It was a compounding of these factors that found Muir particularly open and sensitive to Mrs. Carr's spiritual mentorship.

Muir's first letter to Mrs. Carr, written on September 15, 1865 from Trout Hollow in many ways indicated the foundational nature of their lifelong relationship. Grateful for Mrs. Carr's cheerful sympathy and encouragement in times of loneliness and doubt, Muir was both relieved and hopeful at the prospect of being able to freely voice the true nature of his thoughts and feelings. "Happy indeed they who have a friend to whom they can unmask the workings of their real life, sure of sympathy and forbearance!"[244] It would be Mrs. Carr's consistently supportive nature and intellectual strength that provided much of the guidance for Muir's own eventual resolution to vocational and philosophical dilemmas. At the time of this September letter, however, he simply felt he could safely express the growing sense of dissatisfaction with the course of work laid out for him.

> Since undertaking, a month or two ago, to invent new machinery for our mill, my mind seems to so bury itself in the work that I am fit for but little else; and then a lifetime is so little a time that we die ere we get ready to live.[245]

For Muir, the question of time was foundational to his restlessness. The death of people he had known and cared for had shown him that life was never assured, that it could end, even for the very young.[246] There seemed no time to waste in seeking the best path in life. Muir was seriously considering the question of what way his life should unfold, "I would like to go to college," he wrote to Mrs. Carr, " but then I have to say to myself, "You will die ere you do anything else." I should like to invent useful machinery, but it comes, "You do not wish to spend your lifetime among machines and you will die ere you do anything else.""'[247] He wanted also to study medicine, but again the felt limits of time. At the end of this list of possibilities Muir finally burst out with the crux of his dilemma, a revelation of a deeply cherished dream – "How intensely I desire to be a Humboldt!"[248]

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[244] *John Muir Papers,* Series I A, Reel 1, 13178. Letter from John Muir to Jeanne Carr, Trouts Mills, near Meaford, C.W.[Canada West], Sept. 13th, 1865.

[245] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Jeanne Carr, September 13th, 1865.

[246] The deaths of Muir's Prairie Du Chien friends, Frances Pelton and her little daughter, Fanny made a strong impression on the young man. Muir had internalized a deep realization that life was fleeting, and time should not to be wasted on trivial and irrelevant pursuits..

Muir's fervent wish to become 'a Humboldt' could simply be viewed as a desire to emulate the great German explorer's epic journeys to wild and exotic locales, a dream that Muir certainly harbored while in Canada and later during his working year in Indianapolis.[249] But I also suggest that underlying this immediate wish to emulate Humboldt's extensive exploration experiences were philosophical influences that linked Muir's nascent ecosophy to the cosmology of Humboldt and in turn to the German poet, dramatist and natural philosopher of the romantic school, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. This rather potent philosophical pedigree influenced both Muir's vocational aspirations and his fledgling ecocentric worldview. To follow this thread of influence, the example that Humboldt provided in Muir's imaginative and intuitive life was a critical element within the context of Muir's Canadian period.

Alexander Von Humboldt's Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent was published in 1818, and his late life magnum opus, Cosmos, was published in 1858. Along with Humboldt's other works, both of these voluminous books were more than likely available to Muir for study during his University of Wisconsin years. According to Linnie Marsh Wolfe, Muir carried at least one of Humboldt's extent books into Canada West in 1864.[250] Whatever volume or volumes Muir studied while in Canada, Humboldt's writings influenced Muir's deeply held aspiration to become an explorer/naturalist, as well as his emerging proto-ecological intuitive experience of the foundational unity of all nature, indeed of the cosmos.

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[247] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Jeanne Carr, September 13th, 1865

[248] Ibid.

[249] Alexander von Humboldt, *Cosmos: A Sketch of a Physical Description of the Universe*, vol. 1, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 9. (Originally published New York: Harper & Brothers, 1858.) Alexander von Humboldt (1769 – 1859), explorer, naturalist, author, born of minor German nobility and educated in the best universities of Europe, became the last universal scholar in the field of natural sciences. Humboldt advanced the need for exacting scientific observation, but also sought to portray nature as a unifying force of the physical universe through poetic prose, "a certain degree of scientific completeness in the treatment of individual facts is not wholly incompatible with a picturesque animation of style." See also Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy,* 136.

[250] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, 82-3. That Muir made such a passionate declaration regarding being 'a Humboldt' also suggests that he had been studying the German explorer's works while in Canada.

The influence on John Muir by both Humboldt, and secondarily Goethe may be traced back to the early Romantic period. The Romantics revived the ancient pagan view of nature that emphasized intuitive awareness and that "all nature is alive and pulsing with energy or spirit."[251] In a distinct rejection of Cartesian dualism (the separation of fact and value, cognitive and affective, body and soul) the romantics sought to emphasize the inter-relatedness of all nature and to bring man back to an immediate and meaningful relationship with the earth.[252]

Among the great thinkers and poets of the romantic genre, both Wordsworth and Thoreau's works had been introduced to Muir before he ventured into Canada West.[253] While it is unknown that Muir read anything by Goethe, it is important to note that the German philosopher was a friend and teacher to Alexander von Humboldt.[254] Humboldt's unique melding of careful scientific observation with a cosmological vision of inter-relatedness and unity in nature (a Goethian outlook) had a discernable effect on Muir's emerging worldview.

Interestingly, Goethe was in turn deeply inspired by the pantheism of the Dutch Jewish philosopher, Benedict (Baruch) Spinoza (1632 – 1677). Spinoza's pantheism was based on the primacy of intuitive knowledge as the highest form of knowing reality, rather than either religious faith or scientific reason. From an intuitive grasp of the inter-related system of the universe, Spinoza felt that humankind would become aware of their place within the universal context and would see all as "an infinite idea of God."[255] His pantheism apprehended no separation between God and creation; God was immanent within all manifestations of nature and the world. Influenced by Spinoza, Goethe's own pantheism posited pagan views of nature that incorporated what he felt to be the best values of Judeo-Christianity.[256] As Worster notes, Goethe rejected Christian dogma that confined one to "a Christian box of a church" and advocated an intimate and immediate relationship with nature, indeed the cosmos, as a source of direct communion and inspiration with the divine.[257] Influenced in part by Goethe, Humboldt in turn advocated a unified and harmonious vision of nature and the cosmos which recognized the interdependence of all in nature. Although careful not to include overt theological concepts in his voluminous writing, Humboldt's works were infused with a personal natural piety that merged both analytical science with aesthetic appreciation and emotional connection with nature.

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[251] Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy*, 82.

[252] Ibid.

[253] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness,* 79. Muir became acquainted with both William Wordsworth and Thoreau's writings during his University of Wisconsin days through the libraries of Jeanne Carr and Professor J.D. Butler.

[254] Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy,* 134. The appreciation Humboldt felt for Goethe may be seen in Humboldt's dedication of the *Essay on the Geography of Plants,* part of the multi-volume *Personal Narrative* to Goethe.

[255] Max Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness,* 123.

> An intimate communion with nature, and the vivid and deep emotions thus awakened, are likewise the source from which have sprung the first impulses toward the worship and deification of the destroying and preserving forces of the universe. But by degrees, as man, after having passed through the different gradations of intellectual development…no longer rests satisfied merely with a vague presentiment of the harmonious unity of natural forces; thought begins to fulfill its noble mission; and observation, aided by reason, endeavors to trace phenomena to the causes from with they spring.[258]

By embracing the poetic, the intuitive knowing of nature, and the scientific in his work, Humboldt provided a powerful model for young Muir; a model that resonated with Muir's own intuitive relationship with nature, his growing individualized Christian beliefs, and his response to the divinity manifested in all nature.

It is also interesting to note that Muir's growing alienation from religious denominationalism and his personal search and growing adherence to a personal Christian outlook were in some ways similar to problems Humboldt encountered. In British reviews of Humboldt's *Cosmos*, critics took exception to Humboldt's avoidance of using the word 'God' and other theological references in his works.[259] Accused of advancing Hegelian pantheism and falling short of his Christian duty to extend his accounting of the nature of the cosmos to include "…reference to Him, the alone eternal, without whose preordination we assert that this order had never been…" Humboldt defended his work as a work of science, and not suited to as an exposition of Christian revelation.[260] While Humboldt considered himself a Christian, his care in restricting overt theological references in his writing was simply his way of expressing that nature was first "a free domain", and as such, is primary to our understanding of connection and interdependency in the great chain of being.

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[256] Ibid. 123-4. Following this philosophical link to Spinoza, it is important to note that Spinoza's pantheism – that God and Nature philosophically were one and the same and that intuitive knowledge allowed the mind to understand the necessity of all that exists as God, also contributed to Arne Naess' intuitive ecosophy, and thus to the principles of the Deep Ecology Movement. In this, the philosophical link back to Spinoza for both Muir and Naess is evident.

[257] Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy,* 86.

[258] Alexander von Humboldt, *Cosmos: A Sketch of a Physical Description of the Universe*, vol. 1, 37.

[259] Nicolaas A Rupke, in "Introduction" to Alexander von Humboldt, *Cosmos: A Sketch of A Physical Description of the Universe*, vol. 1, xxiv.

> In considering the study of physical phenomena, not merely in its bearings on the material wants of life, but in its general influence on the intellectual advancement of mankind, we find its noblest and most important result to be a knowledge of the chain of connection, by which all natural forces are linked together, and made mutually dependent upon each other; and it is the perception of these relations that exalts our views and ennobles our enjoyments.[261]

For Humboldt, the study of nature allowed an individual's perception of interrelationships to 'exalt' religious views, but by avoiding theological references he hoped to avoid denominational wrangling and advance the liberalization of science across social, political and religious boundaries. Overall, Humboldt's works modeled a merging of science with an individualized natural theology, but he took care not to complicate the general acceptance and relevancy of his writing with overt theological references.[262] This model, embedded within Humboldt's works was not lost on John Muir. With his growing fascination with botany (also Humboldt's first line of study) and astronomy while in Canada West, Muir was congruent with Humboldtian scientific discourse. Like Humboldt, Muir began to merge science with his own changing religious views; the study of nature created the path to his personal natural theology.

In ascertaining the influence that Humboldt had upon Muir both in Canada West and later during the Yosemite years, it is also important to note that Humboldt recognized the importance of intuition as a premier and primitive force of knowing the cosmos. Humboldt felt that intuitive knowing of nature was refined and rendered more enjoyable by exacting scientific study. For Humboldt, the enjoyment of contemplating nature/cosmos "…flowed from an intuitive feeling of the order that was proclaimed by the invariable and successive reappearance of the heavenly bodies, and by the progressive development of organized beings."[263] Intuition as primary knowing, Humboldt felt, further benefited from the "maturer (sic) intellect" of man, and nature contemplated rationally through the process of scientific observation also propagated "…this sense of enjoyment [that] springs from a definite knowledge of the phenomena of nature."[264] As Muir so clearly stated that he wanted to 'be a Humboldt', it is important to note that the German explorer's affirmation of the intuitive and imaginative along with the use of accurate science, would have been, if not always explicit, then certainly implicit within the scope of his voluminous works and therefore influential in Muir's emerging worldview. I also suggest, that through a lineage of philosophical influence, Muir's own intuitive response to nature as primary knowing, and his recognition of the divine manifest in nature during the Canadian sojourn and for the remainder of his life, echoes in part the Humboldt-Goethe-Spinoza philosophical legacy.

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[260] Criticism of Humboldt by British clergyman and astronomer, Thomas John Hussey quoted in Nicolaas A Rupke, "Introduction" to Alexander von Humboldt, *Cosmos: A Sketch of a Physical Description of the Universe*, vol. 1, xxiv. It is also important to note that Georg Wilhelm Freiedrich Hegel, great romantic philosopher of history was also influenced by the pantheism of Spinoza.

[261] Ibid.

[262] Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy,* 136-37. Worster states that Humboldt merged the romantic religion of nature worship with science, making them one, "so that science became the principal route to natural piety."

Humboldt's influence on Muir was not restricted solely to philosophical matters. As Steven Holmes points out, Humboldt also provided a socially acceptable male role model for Muir to emulate.[265] Humboldt was not only celebrated as a scientist of great breadth, but was considered the consummate European scholar in his aesthetically sensitive and poetic depiction of natural phenomena. To achieve the celebrated status as one of the "rois d'intelligence ("Kings of the mind)" of European intelligentsia may not have been within the Muir's reach, but the social acceptability for the scientific endeavor was, at least to some extent, a possibility for the young botanist.[266] Further, Humboldt's advocacy of merging poetic prose and exact science in depicting nature may have provided a useful literary template for Muir's future nature writing.

> Descriptions of nature…may be defined with sufficient sharpness and scientific accuracy, without on that account being deprived of the vivifying breath of imagination. The poetic element must emanate from the poetic intuitive perception of the connection between the sensuous and the

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[263] Ibid, 24.

[264] Ibid.

[265] Steven J. Holmes, *The Young John Muir*, 131. Holmes states that for Muir, Humboldt was a "representative man", an aesthetically sensitive scientist as socially acceptable male role model Muir could emulate.

[266] See Nicolaas A., Rupke, "Introduction" to *Cosmos*, vol. 1, xxi, for a description of Humboldt's contemporary reviews.

> intellectual, and of the universality and reciprocal limitation and unity of all the vital forces of nature…He who…secure in the possession of the riches of his native language, knows how to represent with simplicity of individualizing truth that which he has received from his own contemplation, will not fail in producing the impression he seeks to convey; for, in describing the boundlessness of nature, and not the limited circuit of his own mind, he is enabled to leave to others unfettered freedom of feeling.[267]

Although Humboldt's flowery Victorian prose is difficult to wade through, he could not have written a more fitting description of the literary naturalist that Muir would eventually become. Drawing inspiration and knowledge directly from nature and not solely from his own mind would indeed be Muir's lifetime modus operandi. For the young man Muir in Canada West, the rambling exploration of the forests and swamps around the Great Lakes, the focus on both scientific classification and beauty within botanical study, and the growing intuitive and imaginative response to the essence of the divine in nature had distinctive Humboldtian overtones.

Indications of Muir's own Humboldtian dream and cosmological vision began to surface during his Canadian sojourn but were problematic due to the necessity of working for a living. As an expression of Muir's preferred way of engaging with the world, the dream to 'be a Humboldt' represented the exploration of a myriad of possibilities for study and deep communion with nature. Work in the Trout & Jay mill was necessary, however, as a means to follow this dream, and forced Muir into a microcosm of industrial era mechanization with a focus on specialization and production efficiency. For Muir, it seemed that specialization cut off the array of possibilities and wonders of experience in life and the breadth of Humboldt's study and engagement in nature hung like a tantalizing, but unattainable goal. Without the financial and social advantages of a German aristocrat, Muir had to view his choices of avocation and vocation within the practical limits of his own financial and social means. While each possibility held promise, Muir felt that the choice of one to the exclusion of all others narrowed the possibilities of a life fully and richly lived. Expressing regret at the limits of time, Muir shared with Mrs. Carr the range of options for his life and work at that time.

> Could we but live a million of years, then how delightful to spend in perfect contentment so many thousand years in quiet study in college, so many amid the grateful din of machines, so many among human pain, so many thousands in the sweet study of Nature…Then perhaps might we,

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[267] Alexander von Humboldt, Alexander von, *Cosmos: A Sketch of a Physical Description of the Universe*, vol. 2, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 81. Originally published, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1858.)

> with at least a show of reason, "shuffle off this mortal coil' and look back upon our star with something of satisfaction.[268]

The image of Humboldt, the quintessential universalist delving with equal verve into geology, botany, plant geography, zoology, physical geography and political economy within his extent works had Muir wishing for extended time to follow his own deep interests. University study, mechanical invention, medicine and the 'sweet' study of nature all vied for Muir's limited time. Secluded in Trout Hollow, Muir knew that the constraints on his time, made real and immediate by the limits of physical strength and the robust health of youth, made his restlessness even more acute.

Following the disclosure of his deepest held dream to Mrs. Carr, Muir was also clear on what he rejected as a life path option. Having witnessed the single-minded pursuit of material gain among the hard working, survival-oriented lives of the backwoods Canadian pioneers, Muir was scathing of their apparent insensibility to the divinity within nature.

> What you say respecting the littleness of the number who are called to "the pure and deep communion of the beautiful, all-loving Nature," is particularly true of the hard-working, hard-drinking, stolid Canadians. In vain is the glorious chart of God in Nature spread out for them. So many acres chopped is their motto, so they grub away amid the smoke of magnificent forest trees, black as demons and material as the soil they move upon.[269]

Equating such grubbing, drinking, and stolidity to a sort of hell image, Muir felt the 'black demons' had somehow lost their way to a true communion with Nature, and therefore with God. For Muir, choosing such a life would plunge him into the same kind of 'hell', perhaps more so, for while devoting an entire lifetime to material advancement, he would always be aware of the beauty he was effacing, and the all-loving divinity within nature he was denying. This fear drove his self-questioning and fed his confusion. While Muir deeply felt the need for 'pure and deep communion' with nature as per Humboldt's example, the practical necessity of making a living remained just as much a reality for him as it was for the backwoods pioneers, a necessity that contributed to the unresolved tension of his Canadian sojourn.

From his own experiences on the Fountain Lake farm in Wisconsin, and acknowledging the need of settlers in Canada West to achieve security and stability as quickly as possible, Muir softened his first scathing observation with an explanation, but then adds another criticism of the Canadian social and intellectual condition.

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[268] Ibid.

[269] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from JM to Jeanne Carr, September 13th, 1865.

> I often think of the Doctor's lecture upon the condition of the different races of men as controlled by physical agencies. Canada, though abounding in the elements of wealth, is too difficult to subdue to permit the first few generations to arrive at any great intellectual development.[270]

Ruing what he sees as a lack of intellectual development in frontier Canada, Muir may have intimated something of his internal dilemma in addition to his observations of Canadian frontier social conditions. While acknowledging the long period of time it would take to attain fully integrated communities in Canada West, the precedence that pragmatic material needs would take over what he deemed 'intellectual development' underscored Muir's own growing restlessness. If he remained at the Trout & Jay mill working at mechanical inventions and production efficiency, such an environment, he believed, would effectively curtail his options for advanced learning in all other areas of interest. Muir craved intellectual growth, hungered for uninterrupted study, and hoped to return to University if he could muster the financial means. But to acquire these means he too would actively participate in the subjection of nature through his work in the Trout & Jay mill. The incongruity of the distinctly different forces acting within his life during this period added to his confusion and growing inner discordance.

Muir's indictment of the Canadian pioneer mentality, apart from describing what he had actually seen and experienced, may also have been used to highlight what he believed to be differences in 'intellectual development' between himself and Jeanne Carr. Cloistered in the backwoods of Canada, he would remain an "alpha novice" in the sciences that Jeanne Carr had "studied and loved so long."[271] He wished for the opportunity to immerse in the study of the sciences and the beauty of nature, the likes of which he had enjoyed in the Carr family's library with its scientific books and the 'blossom and verdure' of favorite potted plants. Here too was an indication of how Muir saw science functioning happily within the context of nature, albeit nature expressed in Mrs. Carr's plants. Here the "sheaves" of learned scientists coexisted within the "little kingdom of plants, luxuriant and happy as though holding their leaves to the open sky of the most flower-loving zone in the world!"[272] In view of his situation in Trout Hollow, Muir could not see a way to continue his scientific studies and follow the model of Humboldt. It made him increasingly fretful and not a little cross at what he viewed as the inability of the Canadian backwoods pioneers to realize the "charm that could conduct a man" through close communion and reverence for nature.[273]

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[270] Ibid.

[271] Ibid.

[272] Ibid.

It should be noted, however, that Muir's rather pithy criticisms of the Canadian pioneers appeared to be focused on the first six months of his botanical ramble, and not specifically on his Trout Hollow home and family. Rather, in the letter he mentioned "our hollow" twice, and described the lovely hints of autumn color touching the forested slopes, and the pensive sounds of the shallow rapids in the Bighead River. 'Our' hollow had become a home for Muir, and despite his internal discordance and restlessness, he viewed himself as belonging to the little forested enclave as part of the 'family' of friends and co-workers. Muir never wrote any pointed criticism of the Trout & Jay enterprise, he was obviously aware of the need for timber for the mill. This also may have contributed to an internal tension that was unresolvable during his Trout Hollow stay, causing a fretful irritability towards his friends that he later regretted.[274]

In closing this particular letter to Mrs. Carr, Muir was thankful for the opportunity to share the thoughts and concerns of his 'inner life', but felt he was not on the same level as Mrs. Carr intellectually and requested her forbearance in future correspondence. While Muir may have felt he was but a rank student, Mrs. Carr's quick response to his letter, written September 24th assured him of her high regard. "Believe in my cordial and constant interest in all that concerns you…" she wrote "…and that I have a pleasant way of associating you with my highest and purest enjoyments."[275]

While their pure mutual enjoyment of botany and belief in the divine manifest in nature drew them together as friends and spiritual confidants, it was Mrs. Carr's understanding and sympathy that helped Muir most during the fall of 1865. "I see from your letter that you suffer from that which is my most grievous burden – The pressure of Time upon Life… " she wrote, "…But surely it is wiser to lay the foundations deep enough for a structure that shall outlast the fleeting years."[276] No greater advice could she give to the young man working in the Trout Hollow mill than to give credence to his dreams of continued study and exploration of the divine manifest in nature. Although not intended as such, her comment would prove remarkable in its clarity of vision for the future, for in encouraging Muir to pursue all of his dreams and aspirations, she not only mentored his nature spirituality, but encouraged the foundations of Muir's eventual preservationist and literary activism resulting in the formation of the Sierra Club. The elements of Muir's mature ecosophy and the practical application of that ecosophy did indeed outlast the 'fleeting years.'

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[273] Ibid.

[274] "The John Muir Letters to His Meaford Friends", Meaford Museum, Meaford, Ontario. Letter from John Muir to Harriet Trout, January 6th, 1867.

[275] *John Muir Papers,* Jeanne Carr to John Muir, September 24th, 1865.

[276] Ibid.

Further, Mrs. Carr's endorsement of the 'usefulness' of Muir's mechanical invention, even though the vocation created internal tension in Muir, at least allowed an acknowledgment of his abilities as being of some worth to society. "A great mechanical genius is a wonderful gift," she wrote, "something one should hold in trust for mankind..."[277] While Mrs. Carr viewed Muir's work in mechanical invention as a philanthropic endeavor, for Muir the demanding schedule of mill work consumed his days, leaving him increasingly exhausted. "I have to do two or three times as much as I should, enough to set one crazy" he wrote to Sarah and David Galloway, adding "...but my heart is with my toil, and though not in roboust [sic] health I make out to keep above water."[278]

With the onset of winter fast approaching and the prospect of long dark winter evenings devoid of botanical rambles, Muir began to reassess his future. In his letter to Sarah and David, he indicated the possibility of returning to University for further study, and requested several University level textbooks to be forwarded to him, four dealing with mathematics and one on astronomy.[279] Although there is no further indication of what Muir's intent was in focusing on mathematics and astronomy, it may have been born of the mutual interest in astronomy between William Henry Trout and Muir, as well as ample starlit hours of northern winters available for celestial study. Further, Muir's thirst to learn, and his tentative plan to return to university for study may have included the intention to concentrate on the science of astronomy, explaining perhaps his request for texts on calculus, geometry and trigonometry.[280] It is also distinctly possible that Muir's interest in mathematics and astronomy was influenced by Humboldt's inclusion of space and the role of astronomy in his unified description of the universe. Humboldt believed that the study of both terrestrial and celestial phenomena, would "embrace the limits of the science of the Cosmos…whose exalted part it is to show the simultaneous action and the connecting links of the forces which pervade the universe."[281] Humboldt's strong advocacy of astronomy as an important field of study and as an element in a unified and interconnected cosmos may well have suggested to Muir one way of realizing his own dream to follow Humboldt's example.

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[277] Ibid.

[278] *John Muir Papers,* Series I A, 09273. Letter from John Muir to David and Sarah Galloway, Trouts Mills, Oct. 23rd/65.

[279] Ibid.

In his November letter to Emily Pelton, Muir was more specific regarding his long-term plans. Intending to return to the United States in summer or fall of 1866, he mentioned he may return to the University for further studies. Discontented with his level of education, but "dragged into machinery whether I would or no", Muir continued to work to fulfill the rake and broom handle contract with the Trout & Jay Company, his days filled with seemingly never ending repetitive work.[282]

At some point during the summer or early fall he was able to break loose of the mill-work for a botanical ramble in the Owen Sound area. Wandering along the limestone rocks wet with seeping springs and deeply shaded by the beech and maple forests, he found many beautiful and rare ferns – personal discoveries that brought him great enjoyment and added new depth to his love of botany.

Captivated by the intricate beauty of mosses and enamored with ferns, Muir made reference to his botanical finds throughout much of his correspondence during the fall and into the winter of 1866.[283] "The secluded glens and dales of Canada are richly ornamented with these lovely plants" he wrote to Mrs. Carr, and were "by far the most interesting of all the natural orders to me."[284] Inspired by Mrs. Carr's indoor herbarium, Muir brought into his upstairs bedroom a collection of live mosses, a fern, liverworts and lichens, along with a box full of aromatic thyme to brighten the long cold winter months.[285] Although impatient with the low power of his field lens, Muir spent a great deal of time analyzing the composition of the mosses he had collected. Delving into the exotic and complex world of mosses and lichens not only provided a welcome reprieve from the busy repetition of work in the mill, but added to his scientific knowledge of botany.

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[280] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness,* 95-6. Wolfe also notes that Muir was interested in pursuing the field of astronomy, as one science among many that captivated his imagination.

[281] Alexander von Humboldt, *Cosmos: A Sketch of A Physical Description of the Universe*, vol. 1, 55.

[282] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Emily Pelton, Nov. 12th, 1865.

[283] *John Muir Papers,* Series I A, Reel 1, frames, 09273, 00362, 00365. Muir makes reference to his botanical finds in his letters to Emily Pelton, Sarah and David Galloway and Jeanne Carr.

[284] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Jeanne Carr, "The Hollow" Jan 21/66.

By January 1866, Muir had succeeded in inventing several labor saving devices. While justifiably proud of his accomplishments he was once again voiced doubts about the direction that his life ought to take. Although encouraged by Mrs. Carr to view his inventive genius as God's gift for bettering the condition of people, Muir remained ambivalent about the validity of this philanthropic argument to his situation. After describing his most recent invention for a self-acting lathe and its increased capacity for the production of broom handles to Mrs. Carr, Muir tried to convince himself of the value of his mechanical work.

> …and as these useful articles may now be made cheaper, and as cleanliness is one of the cardinal virtues, I congratulate myself in having done something like a true philanthropist for the real good of mankind in general. What say you?
> …rakes may now be made nearly as fast again, farmers will be able to produce grain at the lower rate, the poor get more bread to eat. Here is more philanthropy is it not?[286]

The attempt to convince himself that the mill work was indeed a viable and fitting vocation was followed by the illuminating comment, "I sometimes feel as though I were losing time here".[287] Restless and unconvinced that his life would be best devoted to the making of practical machinery, Muir continued to feel that the hours of frantic, 'crazy' work in the rake and broom factory, even with the bonus of learning practical mechanics, was lost time. He felt that he was losing a sense of himself, "I sometimes even forget where I am, what I am doing, or what my name is."[288] By this time, it is probable the only thing that kept him at the Trout & Jay mill was his commitment to completing the rake and broom handle contract and his need for funds.

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[285] Ibid. See also *John Muir Papers,* Series I A, Reel 1, frame 00424. Letter from Mary Trout to John Muir, Hollow, April 16, 1966. Muir's little garret garden was apparently also enjoyed by Mary Trout, as she briefly mentions it in a letter to Muir after he left Canada West.

[286] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Jeanne Carr, "The Hollow", Jan. 21/66.

[287] Ibid.

[288] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to sisters Mary, Anna and Joanna Muir, Trout's Hollow, C.W., Dec. 24, 1865.

Coupled with Muir's growing dissatisfaction with the 'philanthropy' of mechanical invention, Muir's Canadian sojourn provided indications of his growing disaffection with conventional religion. Letters to Jeanne Carr and his brother Daniel during January and February 1866 confirm Muir's shifting religious and philosophical views. It became apparent that Muir consciously retracted from both the evangelical fanaticism of his father and the increasingly legalistic denominational tendencies of the Trout family.[289] Expressing his growing rejection of conventional religion in a letter to Mrs. Carr, Muir intimated that while she may relish religious sermons he did not, and in explanation first introduced what would later become a potent metaphor in much of his early writing and personal natural piety – the Book of Nature.

> I was interested with the description you gave of your sermon. You speak of such services like one who appreciated and relished them. But although the page of Nature is so replete with divine truth, it is silent concerning the fall of man and the wonders of Redeeming Love. Might she not have been made to speak as clearly and eloquently of these things as she now does of the character and attributes of God? It might be a bad symptom, but I will confess that I take more intense delight from reading the power & goodness of God from "the things which are made" than from the Bible, the two books however harmonize beautifully, and contain enough of divine truth for the study of all eternity. It is so much easier for us to employ our faculties upon these beautiful tangible forms than to exercise a simple humble living faith such as you so well describe as enabling us to reach out joyfully into the future to expect what is promised as thing of tomorrow.[290]

Muir's revelation that he would rather read the goodness of God in nature rather than through the Bible was a critical milestone in his philosophical development. Implicit within this passage was Muir's skepticism that simple faith alone, without engagement in the divine in nature, was enough for his personal independent religious belief. For Muir, it was easier to see the positive loving nature of God through nature rather than be singularly reliant upon religious doctrine. It was apparent that he has chosen to walk his own chosen path to an individual relationship with God through nature, away from the sermons and denominational interpretations of conventional religious practice. Softening his position somewhat for Mrs. Carr's devout Christian sensibilities, he did add that the two books are not at odds with each other and are both worth a lifetime of study, however, it is clear that Muir had turned some fundamental corner in his own philosophical and religious evolution. Here also was a clear expression of panenthiesm, a recognition that in God's works was evidence of the divine, but Muir still left the concept of God as separate and primary. Muir had not yet moved into the ecstatic pantheism that marked his mature ecosophy and much of his private writings.

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[289] *John Muir Papers,* Reel 1, frame 00367. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Muir commented to Daniel, "I agree with the Trouts on religious matters as badly as ever…"

[290] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Jeanne Carr, "The Hollow", Jan. 21, 1866.

What was also interesting about Muir's comments in a January 1866 letter to Jeanne Carr was his allegiance to the here and now, to the use of his time in a way that best fit his deepest wishes and spiritual relationship with God in nature. It was much easier, he stated, to immerse in the real and tangible forms of nature, and therefore of God, than simply wait in faith for redemption. The divinity manifest in nature is for Muir a sure path to a more profound relationship with the Creator. Muir's chronic worry about wasting time, his growing natural spirituality and rejection of conventional religious doctrine all began to combine to indicate the direction he felt he should take with his life.

The 'Book of Nature' letter was the last Muir wrote to Mrs. Carr from Canada West. The letter clearly showed the depth of their growing friendship and spiritual affinity. Even though Muir carefully worded the more radical implications of his shifting religious perspectives out of respect for Mrs. Carr, he knew he had found in her an intellectual and spiritual confidant who could help him clarify his own thoughts and feelings on God and Nature. It is safe to say that the foundations of the long friendship between Muir and Mrs. Carr truly had their emotional and spiritual roots in this first, important exchange of letters while Muir lived in Canada West.

The Mill fire - Loss and Leave-taking

As winter wore into February, Muir wrote a newsy rambling letter to his brother Daniel in Buffalo, New York.[291] The essence of the letter was light-hearted and personal, with Muir sharing news of the community and friends and teasing Dan about his tardiness in returning letters. Dan had been a favorite of the Trout sisters, and Muir gleefully remonstrated his brother for the supposed 'loss' of all their letters to him and the 'loss' of Dan's reply and his tone indicated the good-natured teasing that was an integral element of the Trout Hollow family dynamic. "Now Dan if all these loving letters from loving girls are really lost you in justice to yourself and them should "lament in rhyme lament in prose" as I have done over the loss of yours."[292]

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[291] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Daniel Muir Jr., St.Vincent, February 18th, 1866.

In comparison to the January letter to Mrs. Carr, this missive indicated many positive aspects of Muir's life in Trout Hollow; his close friendships, the good humor shared by all, pride in work accomplishments, and community interaction. But Muir was also hungry for news from Dan; the good-natured scolding barely covered Muir's real need to hear from his younger brother. Although the Trout Hollow family had become valued friends, the long winter and time away from loved family members prompted a basal loneliness and need to reconnect with Daniel. After peppering Daniel with personal questions, it is interesting to see that Muir twice asked Dan which church he attended in Buffalo. In light of his own growing ambivalence regarding the Disciples denominationalism, Muir may have been hoping for a more candid discussion with Dan regarding religious matters, another indication of his growing disenchantment with conventional religion and search for personal clarification.

With a sense of accomplishment, Muir also informed Dan that the mill has just produced thirty thousand broom handles for a Toronto firm of which he had personally turned twenty-eight thousand. Knowing that Dan would appreciate his inventive skill and productivity, Muir described his list of mechanical improvements. "I invented an important attachment for the lathe by which better and far faster turning can be done" he wrote, adding he had also created "an entirely new method of making rake teeth, also of making bows…a machine for boring…and drilling the teeth and…other fixins [sic] of greater or lesser importance."[293] Although justifiably proud of his inventions, Muir had not given up his plans to continue his university studies, and once again requested, this time from Dan, the purchase and forwarding of textbooks on astronomy, geometry and calculus. From this request, it is probable that Muir intended to remain in Trout Hollow for some time, completing the broom and rake contract, and possibly staying until mid to late summer 1866. Whatever Muir's plans were, they were not to be realized within the time scale he had anticipated, for the ill-fated Glasgow stove ensconced in the Trout & Jay mill and responsible for two previous setbacks to the Trout family, delivered its final disaster to the Trout family business ventures.[294]

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[292] Ibid.

[293] Ibid.

Four days after Muir wrote to Daniel, the Trout Hollow family awoke from a sound slumber near midnight, and "…on looking over the pond saw that the mill was all afire, and in a few hours it was all burned, and all the tools and machines too."[295] The weather that winter had been unusually cold and stormy with "roaring wind thick with snow" and many "driffins"; small drifts of fine snow seeping through the cracks and under the doors of the cabin and mill.[296] Late in the evening of February 21st, with the faulty Glasgow stove more than likely banked and left for the night, something caused it to ignite the mill. By the time the Trout Hollow group could dress and head to the mill, the structure was lost. Muir, William, Peter, Mary and Charles Jay watched their livelihoods burn to the ground, powerless to fight the inferno. "It was a grand sight although so sad," wrote Muir, " 'the hollow' was full of strong glaring light that gleamed & sparkled in the snow and made the tall elms & maples cast deep heavy shadows upon the slanting hillsides…"[297] So fierce was the mill fire that Rachel Trout, rising early at the Trout farmstead noted the reflected glow in her diary:

> 22 February 1866. The folks started for Erin this morning. There has been some building or other burned last night. We saw the light distinctly this morning. I fear it is our mill, for it is in that direction. If it is, what will the boys do?
> 23 February 1866. What I found this morning is really true – the mill is reduced to ashes. It seems like some fearful dream. I would it were one, but it is stern and awful reality. It burned to the ground last night. What will our boys do?
> 24 February 1866. How thankful we should be that none of our loved ones are hurt, as they likely would have been had it been discovered earlier. The loss is estimated at about $3000. I feel so bad for poor John Muir as anyone else. He is so kind and good even now – almost forgetting his own loss in sympathy for the boys. He is going to leave us next week.[298]

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[294] *Trout Family History,* 55. Three accidents to the Trout family occurred with this particular box stove, the first involving substantial and painful burns to the Trout boys at a very young age, the second when the stove caused the loss of William Sr.'s shop and tools in Norval, the finally the loss of the Trout & Jay mill in Trout Hollow in 1866.

[295] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Master Henry Butler, Indianapolis, April 22, 1866.

[296] Muir made reference to the severe winter weather in letters to Mrs. Carr and his brother Daniel during the winter of 1865-66.

[297] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Master Henry Butler, Indianapolis, April 22, 1866.

[298] Peter M. Rinaldo, *Nature, Nurture, and Chance,* 35. Rachel Trout's diary is in keeping with Mr. Rinaldo.

The loss of the mill was economically disastrous for William Henry Trout and Charles Jay. With no insurance on the property and with depleted financial savings as they had recently made a sizable payment on the property, Trout & Jay were in a poor financial position but "settled with John Muir under the peculiar circumstances as equitably as only Christian brothers could."[299] Muir accepted whatever cash they could 'scratch up' along with a promissory note, without time limit or interest, for the balance owing.[300] In fairness to his friends, Muir reduced his account from three to two hundred dollars. "I was very sorry for my employers" Muir later recalled, "they are good young men and could not well bear so great a loss," but tellingly, he did not feel discouraged at the loss of his inventions.[301] Muir now had a solid grasp of practical mechanical skills, partly due to the practical instruction of William Henry Trout, and to his own natural abilities in inventing automated machinery. It was always possible to invent other machines, the knowledge and experience gained in the Trout & Jay mill would be transferable to any future inventive mechanical endeavors.

The Trout Hollow 'family' remained in the cabin for only a few days after the mill fire. All wondered what to do next, for the mill was a total loss. Each contemplated their options and eventually pursued opportunities that fit their skills and aptitudes. As William Henry Trout noted, "Now, after the mill was burned, it was deemed best to separate. Each one to make the best possible shift for himself."[302] The Trout Hollow family was saddened but not surprised at Muir's decision to return to the United States. William found work in the burgeoning oil fields at Oil Springs, near Toronto. Charles Jay stayed in Meaford and settled the final accounts for the mill, and to the surprise of many, including Muir, married Mary Trout on July 7th, 1866.[303] Shortly after their marriage, Mary and Charles joined William in Oil Springs. Peter Trout stayed in Meaford, and took over Muir's Sunday School class, but eventually found work at a sawmill on Christian Island, offshore from Collingwood. Harriet continued to teach school in Meaford, the only member of the core Trout Hollow 'family' to remain in the community.

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[299] *Trout Family History,* 123

[300] Ibid.

[301] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Master Henry Butler from JM, Indianapolis, April 22, 1866.

[302] W.H. Trout, *Trout Family History,* 138.

[303] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from Mary Hark to John Muir, April 3rd, 1867.

John Muir and his Canadian friends were well and truly scattered; the quiet secluded days by the Bighead River remembered as a happy interlude in each of their lives. In an April letter to Muir, Mary Trout was sad and nostalgic, "John, the poor old hollow seems just the place for reflections particularly of a sad nature. It is just as peaceful and free from gossip as ever…Your room looks very awfully deserted, the moss kept green while we staid [sic] there."[304] In a heartfelt letter to Muir, Harriet encapsulated the essence of the Trout Hollow days, and Muir's integral part in all of their lives.

> The lovely hills and everflowing little stream is just the same, and it is impossible for me to describe the feelings I had – every place I would turn would bring some pleasing remembrance to my mind. Was there ever more freedom of speech, thought, and action felt on earth than in that 'hollow'. We were all equal, everyone did as he chose. Ah me! I hope that the happy days will return that we may be there again, and that you might be one of our number for at least a short time. The circle would be incomplete without you.[305]

Muir's sojourn in Canada was over. Ties of friendship with the Trout family, forged through work, study, good-natured banter and botanical rambles were not enough to keep Muir in Canada West. While the mill-fire had released him from the intense productivity of mill work, Muir was remained without adequate funds to return to university or to pursue his Humboldtian dream. After bidding goodbye to his friend Duncan Stirling on a rise of land looking out onto the beauty of Georgian Bay, Muir was reflective about his future prospects.

> As I gazed after leaving you over the broad prospect, I thought of Milton's lines concerning Adam & Eve when leaving paradise, "The world was all before them" and as the ambition of a young man sped the hot blood through my veins, I was willing to stir in the warfare of life and to revolve in ceaseless activity upon the wheel of duty. But while I felt the rush and weighs of that onward current which receives its clination [sic] & impetus from God himself, I could almost wish myself landed in a quiet recess where the disturbing elements of life's noisier conflicts might never come.[306]

It is apparent from this rather conflicted passage that Muir still harbored a tension between what he felt he should do and what he felt he truly desired to do. While referring to the wheel of 'duty' in militaristic terms that invoke a loss of personal choice, Muir countered this 'ambition' with a wish to retract and find sanctuary away from society, in some 'quiet recess', much the same, it could be argued, as he had found in Trout Hollow. The tension between these two expectations had not been resolved.

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[304] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from Mary Trout to John Muir , April 13th, 1866.

[305] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from Harriet Trout to JM, May 10th, 1866.

[306] "The John Muir Letters to his Meaford Friends", Meaford Museum, Meaford, Ontario. Letter from John Muir to Duncan Stirling, Indianapolis, July 1st, 1866.

It is also interesting to note that Muir's metaphorical use of Milton's Paradise Lost; of Adam and Eve facing a world full of unknown possibilities signaled both the beginning and the end of his Canadian period. While Muir's first use of the Adam and Eve metaphor in March 1864 was written with all the uncertainty, loneliness and trepidation of a young man venturing into the unknown, his use of it upon leaving Meaford was cast in an rather different light. The Muir who left Canada West was not a hesitant, lonely young man who viewed his future without confidence, rather, Muir had gained a stronger sense of independent religious convictions and philosophical thought, and he was also more secure in his ability to financially support himself. The world was indeed, all before him, and with nothing to detain him in Canada, and friends, family and opportunities beckoning from south of the border, Muir returned to the United States in early March 1866.

Indianapolis – life path questions and turning points

It would be remiss not to explore the period directly after Muir's Canadian sojourn, for many of the ideas fostered and lessons learned in Canada continued to influence Muir's life on both practical and emotional levels. Muir did not linger in Meaford. Around the first of March he said goodbye to his Trout Hollow friends and immediately journeyed to Buffalo, where his brother Daniel was working in a machine shop. Pursuing their interest in machinery, the brothers toured several foundries and machine shops in Buffalo. Restless and intent on learning, Muir eventually took leave of Dan and made his way through New York, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Ohio, stopping briefly in Columbus to tour more machine shops.[307] Eventually, with limited funds and in need of work, Muir made his way to the industrial centre of Indianapolis. Within hours of arriving in the city, he procured a job in a wagon parts factory owned by Osgood & Smith.

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[307] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Master Henry Butler, Indianapolis, April 22, 1866.

From his written comments to friends and family, it is apparent that during the months after leaving Canada Muir continued a difficult internal debate in the attempt to resign himself to work in practical and inventive mechanics. Not only had he taken the time to visit industrial firms to extend his understanding of practical inventive mechanics, but after settling in Indianapolis and finding a lucrative job in manufacturing he felt he should be set on the right life path.

> … I have about made up my mind that it is impossible for me to escape from mechanics, I begin to see and feel that I really have some talent for invention and I just think that I will turn all my attention that way at once…I am determined not to leave it (Indianapolis) until I have made my invention mark.[308]

The undertone of niggling doubt throughout this passage is illuminating. On a now common refrain, it is apparent that Muir was still embroiled in an internal debate, attempting to convince himself that the practical occupation of mechanics was the right route to take.

In addition to the internal dialogue regarding his future vocation, Muir mentioned to his brother that he had started making a model of the iron clock he had initially conceived while in Trout Hollow in order to present it to the patent office, adding "as soon as the clock is disposed of I will begin operation for another patent..."[309] Applying for patents on inventions clearly showed how seriously Muir considered his future in mechanics. But once again, when writing to his sister, Sarah, later in May, he reiterated the same concerns and self-questioning that plagued the dichotomy of his dilemma.

> I feel something within, some restless fires that urge me on in a way very different from my real wishes, and I suppose that I am doomed to live in some of these noisy commercial centers… …Circumstances over which I have had no control almost compel me to abandon the profession of my choice, and to take up the business of an inventor...and I almost think unless things change soon I shall turn my whole mind into that channel. [310]

Immediately after expressing his indecision, Muir described the forest around Indianapolis as "beautiful flowers and trees of God's own garden, so pure and chaste and lovely, I could not help shedding tears of joy."[311] It is also telling that weeks earlier, perhaps even while he was still working in Trout Hollow, Muir had a dream, vivid enough to recount to his young friend, Henry Butler.

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[308] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Daniel Muir Jr., Indianapolis, May 7th, 1866.

[309] Ibid.

[310] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Sarah Muir Galloway, Indianapolis, May 1866.

[311] Ibid.

> I dreamed a few weeks ago that I was walking by a deep clear stream that flowed through a field of hay that was waving in the wind and changing in the light and all ornamented with gorgeous flowers. Beautiful dream was it not?[312]

The internal debate that Muir stated in his letters to Mrs. Carr while in Trout Hollow had not been resolved. His burning desire to 'be a Humboldt' remained his deepest and truest wish; he dreamed of walking along clear streams among the beauty of flowers. How then, could he reconcile this other strong but indescribable 'feeling' that would not let him follow his wish? Linnie Marsh Wolfe states that he only went to work in Indianapolis to make enough money to return to his botanical rambles, but then his innate interest in mechanics, and concern regarding possible financial needs of his family served to bind him to industrial work.[313] Muir provided his own explanation on this period of his life in a later contemplation of his first long immersion in nature.

> The only exception to complete contentment was a lingering notion instilled from childhood that I had work to do as part of society. I must choose a profession and settle down… a dreadfully significant term, settling down, and should not be done rashly. It should be done with ceremony and religious rites.[314]

To do good work on the part of society, to be useful in some way was a constant refrain from family and friends. Furthermore, Muir had remained embedded within a family and social context that encouraged the conventional and socially 'acceptable' path. The Trout family was the epitome of adherence to hard work and family responsibility in the face of adversity; Emily Pelton encouraged him to stick to his inventions; Dan worked to make enough money for further education; his Mother was hopeful that all the unfortunate hindrances that had impeded his progress towards financial security would now be behind him; and Mrs. Carr told him that the gift of inventive genius was a gift from God, meant to help mankind. All of this combined to make a potent argument to walk the way of 'all good boys.' Unable to resolve his internal dilemma, and recognizing the need for solid financial savings regardless of his path in life, Muir continued to work in Indianapolis through the summer and into the winter of 1866-67.

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[312] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Henry Butler, April 22, 1866.

[313] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, 100-01.

[314] Robert Engberg and Donald Wesling, eds., *John Muir – to Yosemite and Beyond*, 27-8. Autobiographical notes.

Highly successful with his endeavors at Osgood & Smith, Muir softened the self-enforced 'responsible' path by making new friends and extending his social life. As an indication of his need for social contact and despite the scolding he had heaped upon the Trout's regarding their stiff-necked denominational doctrine, he joined a Disciples of Christ congregation in Indianapolis. It was perhaps the action of a young man seeking the solace of the familiar, for he also consented to lead another group of Sunday School scholars into the woods each Sabbath. Muir remained leery, however, of the ultimate meaning of settling down, admitting once again to his brother Dan of a "slavish fear" of romantic entanglement and marriage.[315] Muir believed that the end of his dream to engage in the study of nature would occur with the dreaded eventuality of 'ceremony and religious rites.' Even with the nudging of family to "forget those confounded weeds, marry, and go into business" he remained friendly but romantically aloof from his female acquaintances in Indianapolis.[316]

John Muir's feelings about his Trout Hollow experience did not become truly apparent until after he had settled in Indianapolis. In retrospect, he began to appreciate his life and friends in Canada West in a new light. "… I loved the peaceful hollow in Canada" he wrote to young Henry Butler shortly after arriving in Indianapolis, it "… was so sequestered and calm that I got along first rate."[317] Amid the 'jar and din' of his life in the great noisy dusty city, Muir's nostalgia and love of his Trout Hollow home became more acute.

> …the blazing pomp of the place, so far from weakening my love for, or causing me to forget my friends, and the beauty and simplicity of nature around or calm solitude at the mill rather tends to keep them more vividly before me and to make me love & value them more…from this conglomerate of din unending, I have longed to see my favorite plants & people & places of Canada with almost childish fondness.[318]

Reasons for Muir's retrospective sentimentalism for Canada may be attributed in part to leaving his surrogate family, but also to the loss of close and immediate contact with wild nature. Muir's recollection of the 'calm solitude' at the mill was particularly telling, indicating that despite the busy mechanical work, the mill site had a beauty and simplicity that fostered a serene relationship with nature that was, for Muir, particularly important to his Canadian sojourn. The separation of his working life from wild nature was not so drastic and apparent in Canada as it was in Indianapolis, and this in itself brought a renewed appreciation for the life he lived in Trout Hollow.

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[315] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Daniel Muir, Indianapolis, Ind', May 7th, 1866.

[316] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, 89.

[317] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Henry Butler, Indianapolis, Ind', Apr. 22nd/66.

[318] "The John Muir Letters to his Meaford Friends," Meaford Museum, Meaford, Ontario. Letter from John Muir to Duncan Stirling, Indianapolis, July 1st, 1866.

Over the course of the summer and fall of 1866, Muir's working life in Indianapolis also served to bring home the profound differences between the Trout Mill work and the industrial complex of a large city. While often asserting his desire to put his mind to inventive mechanics, Muir's reservations regarding the safety and health destroying aspects of heavy industrial enterprise began to surface. "This town is noted for fever & ague, but I am determined not to leave it until I have made my invention mark" he wrote in May, but by November was once again having deep reservations about his work.[319] In a letter to Daniel, Muir's letter was by turns gloomy and edgy as he impressed his brother to remember the shortness of life and "that you must die" and then recounted the uncreative, repetitive toil of the shops. "It is certainly a dreary thing..." he wrote, "…to file in a great smoky shop among devilish men…and so on for days and days and weeks and weeks and months and months and years and years."[320] In contrast to Muir's Trout Hollow mill work, there was no tempering presence of friends and little inventive creativity, and as Muir so succinctly put it, "…precious little more fun in the business or romance either..."[321]

In correspondence between William Trout, Charles Jay and Muir, there had been some discussion of Trout & Jay coming to Indianapolis to work in the late fall of 1866. To this Muir was adamantly opposed. "I hope I have scared Wm. and Chas' from coming here late fall" he wrote in July.[322] A few months later, apparently responding to a query from Charles Jay, Muir alluded to the reason he thought it unwise for his Canadian friends to seek work in Indianapolis. "Chas, I cannot but think that the air & water of your great country… are the elements you trouts and jays should move in…you must have patience & gather strength for some time." Having watched the plight of a "black machinest trying to cough up the sooty and greasy and irony and I don't know all what mixture…" Muir warned his friends away from debilitating effects of the Indianapolis industrial shops. It could also be that Muir simply preferred to remember the Trout Hollow 'family' as happily ensconced in the idyllic dell on the Bighead River, a reassuring memory of peace and family happiness in the face of adversity.

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[319] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Daniel Muir, Indianapolis, May 7th, 1866.

[320] *John Muir Paper,* Letter from John Muir to Daniel Muir, Indianapolis, November 19th, 1866.

[321] Ibid.

[322] "The John Muir Letters to his Meaford Friends", Meaford Museum, Meaford, Ontario. Letter from John Muir to Duncan Stirling, July 1st, 1866.

> I wonder where you all are now, - is it so that after your sore partings and sail on the wide cold outside sea you have gathered, and again nestle in quiet in your tranquil hollow. If so I am sure that you will enjoy each others society more, if possible, than ever. The peacefulness of your hollow will be still more peaceful, and all the comforts of home will glow with a keener charm, and who will say that blessings so great are not worth even all the price you have paid.[323]

Muir's patent loneliness for his own family became more pressing as he worked through the fall months, which may account somewhat for this nostalgic mental picture of the Trout family gathered once more in family love. "I have been very thoroughly homesick...I always thought myself possessed of sufficient resolution and strength of mind to carry me quite above all this...I have been sorely mistaken however" he wrote to Dan, an admission that marked the extent of Muir's emotional need for family contact.[324] Markedly, this was level of homesickness that had not been apparent in Trout Hollow.

Feeling adrift emotionally but constrained by the need for funds, Muir did not hesitate to proffer advice to Daniel, but it is advice that he could just as well apply to himself. "Above all get acquainted with God and yourself..." he wrote to Dan, "... get two or three books (the latest) on philosophy and engineering...whittle out as many new notions as you have time for and don't hurry yourself."[325] For Muir, to get acquainted with God was to get acquainted with nature and yourself. To have the luxury of time to explore as many ideas as possible; from the abstract ideas in philosophy to the more concrete discipline of engineering, was a worthy goal. For Muir, however, the pull toward nature and the divine manifest in nature remained preeminent, despite the pragmatic forces holding him to work in the industrial shops of Indianapolis.

Throughout Muir's Indianapolis period, correspondence continued to and from his Trout Hollow friends. The letters show Muir's continued interest and affection for his Canadian friends. Surprised by the marriage between Mary Trout and Charles Jay, Muir wrote to Harriet's friend, Mary Harkus, and asked her thoughts on the union. Mary Harkus was also surprised, writing to Muir "…until the very last week before the marriage people thought Harriet to be the one."[326] Perhaps most surprising for Muir was realizing his complete incomprehension of the emotional undercurrents and hidden romantic affections between his Trout Hollow friends, including, as he was to find out later, those that involved him.

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[323] Ibid. Letter from John Muir to Harriet Trout, January 6th, 1867.

[324] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Daniel Muir, Indianapolis, November 19th, 1866.

[325] Ibid.

After the marriage of Mary and Charlie, Harriet remained in Meaford to teach school, but wished for a return to her old life with loved siblings and companions in Trout Hollow.

> The Malta kitten and I are all that remains of the once happy occupants of that little spot, so you must feel very sorry for me and say "poor Hattie", for, John, I do feel lonely, I can't help it. Though my time is continually occupied, I feel as if there were something lacking, and it is just the company of my most intimate friends.[327]

By the fall of 1866, Harriet's loneliness and wish to reclaim the company of her most intimate friends led her to divulge, in a letter to Muir, a deep romantic affection for him. Dumfounded by her revelation, Muir did not answer Harriet's letter for some time, an indication perhaps of his inability to deal with his 'slavish fear' of romantic attachment as much as his complete surprise at the depth of Harriet's regard. Muir's eventual response to Harriet's disclosure was gentle and self-deprecating; an attempt to spare the feelings of a valued friend and to carefully extricate himself from romantic expectations.

> What you say upon friendship is all true, and I believe & feel it all, I confess Hattie, that the deep substantial warmth of your feelings a little surprises me and I never thought to find in you so true a friend. Mostly I suppose because I was sure I did not deserve such…[328]

Harriet's reaction to this letter is unknown, but the friendship survived. Not long after Muir wrote this letter to Harriet, he received a letter from their mutual friend, Mary Harkus, intimating that Harriet would "…not remain long at home either if somebody's health improves…" an oblique reference to the deepening relationship between Harriet and Duncan Stirling.[329] Although Mary Harkus suggested that Muir, with his 'usual shrewdness', would have long ago known of the relationship between Harriet and Duncan, Muir could only have wondered, once again, at his own lack of perception of the emotional undercurrents between the young people of Trout Hollow.

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[326] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from Mary Harkus to John Muir, Oakville, April 3rd, 1867.

[327] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from Harriet Trout to John Muir, Meaford, May 10th, 1866.

[328] . "The John Muir Letters to his Canadian Friends", Meaford Museum, Meaford, Ontario. Letter from John Muir to Harriet Trout, Indianapolis, January 6th, 1867.

[329] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from Mary Harkus to John Muir, Oakville, April 3rd, 1867. Duncan Stirling was recovering from a chronic illness at this time. Harriet Trout would eventually wed Duncan Stirling on March 31, 1870.

While Muir stringently avoided romantic relationships and associated commitments during the Indianapolis period, his friendship with Mrs. Carr continued to be an intellectual and spiritual support. It is interesting, however, that during the first few months in Indianapolis Muir did not correspond with Mrs. Carr. His most recent letter to her was dated January 21, 1866, in which he mentions he likes his mechanical work 'exceedingly well', but then questions whether philanthropy through mechanical inventions is enough to validate his life. After this, Mrs. Carr was silent, nor did Muir write to her in Madison. It was not until Mrs. Carr had the opportunity to read Muir's April 1866 letter to young Henry Butler that she was prompted to pick up her pen. "Little Henry's letter has made me feel how much I have lost in letting you alone so many months" she wrote, "...and I have done injustice to my own heart in not telling you how really sorry I was for the misfortune that took you out of the Canada woods."[330] Having felt that Muir had been more at home in the wild reaches of Canada, a "picture fully framed" and happy in nature, Mrs. Carr sympathized with Muir's discomfort living and working within an industrialized metropolis.[331]

In his reply to Mrs. Carr, written in October 1866, Muir moved the relationship with Mrs. Carr into a more candid spiritual and philosophical level. This brief letter provides important clues to Muir's spiritual experiences within wild nature in Canada West, his emerging ecosophy, and the depth of friendship he felt for Mrs. Carr. "I have never before shared these thoughts with others" he wrote, "but I know that I am speaking to one who by long and deep communion with Nature understands them, and can tell me what is true, or false and unworthy in my experiences."[332] Heartened by Mrs. Carr's understanding of his loneliness in Indianapolis, her sympathy for his misfortune with the Trout Hollow mill fire and her intuitive empathy with his deep love of nature, Muir felt free to express the depth of his response to nature. Responding to Mrs. Carr's concept of him in Canada as "...a picture fully framed in that wild picturesque region" and her question, "Did you not feel more at home with nature there, than the human element now surrounding you?" Muir was both brief and eloquent. The picture of himself embedded in Trout Hollow was to Muir "…but an insect – an animalcula", a reference to the insignificance he felt as one small entity within the context of nature.[333] Muir then attempted to explain the essence of his response to nature in the Canadian wild.

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[330] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from Jeanne Carr to John Muir, October 12, 1866.

[331] Ibid.

[332] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Jeanne Carr, Osgood & Smith, October, 1866.

> I have stood by a majestic pine witnessing its high branches waving 'in signs of worship' or in converse with the spirit of the storms of Autumn, till I forgot my very existence, and thought myself unworthy to be made a leaf of such a tree.[334]

For Muir, the wind dance of a majestic pine expressed its ability to worship the divine; to actually communicate with the spirit of Autumn storms. This was a radical departure from conventional religious belief, for Muir saw in the realm of nature a sense of selfhood, an ability within nature for relational communication between elements; the tree and the wind; the tree and the spirit of storms; the tree and the divine. So powerful was this realization, and so mystical the experience that he forgot his very existence - he lost a sense of himself in a realized extension of relationship between nature and the divine. How humbling it was to realize the insignificance of man in this communication between tree and storm, so much so that Muir felt 'unworthy to be made a leaf on such a tree.'

From an eco-philosophical perspective, Muir's expression of losing a sense of himself indicated a merging of his own self into the all encompassing entity of nature, a harbinger of Muir's mature ecocentric worldview. This was going past mere empathy with nature; it was a mystical realization of unity pervasive in the cosmos, an internalization of that unity in which all were one – thus bringing a loss of his sense of separate self. Occasioned by experiences in the Canadian wild, this signaled a step in the evolution of Muir's personal relationship with nature; a shift towards an ecocentric perspective informed and suffused with his own unique experiences.

In contemplation of the implications of these brief sentences and their noteworthy departure from conventional thinking, it is understandable that Muir would have been reticent in sharing his thoughts with others. But in reading Mrs. Carr's October 12th letter, her acknowledgement of his personal conception of religious truth and her 'deep sympathy' for it gave him confidence to write a profoundly personal disclosure of his emerging relationship within nature. Muir felt that Mrs. Carr would intuitively recognize his personal identification with the pine in its worshipful wind-dance, or the power of the divine suffused in the storms – she would be able to understand his feelings through her own deeply personal and long-lived 'communion with Nature.' It was for Muir both solace and support to be able to share such personal thoughts with a kindred spirit and confidant; a friend whose own sensitivity to nature would not refute or undermine the integrity and power of his own evolving relationship with nature. While Muir's intuitive responses to wild nature were the foundation to his emerging personal ecosophy, Mrs. Carr's acceptance of Muir's "powers of insight into Nature" and the "simplicity of [his] love of her" served to validate these personal responses more than any other person had to that point.[335] In all of this, Mrs. Carr's role as mentor for Muir's nascent exploration of his ecosophical foundations cannot be underestimated.

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[333] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Jeanne Carr, October, 1866.

[334] Ibid.

Calypso – Canadian wilderness epiphany or constructed experience?

In an earlier letter to Mrs. Carr dated January 1866, Muir first mentioned the beautiful northern orchid, 'Calypso Borealis', (*Calypso Bulbosa*) at the end of long list of plants that he found during his rambles about Meaford and Owen Sound. The reference is not particularly noteworthy in itself. "Calypso borealis is a lovely plant found in a few places in dark hemlock woods" he wrote, and followed this with an abrupt " – but this is an endless theme I may as well stop here." Mrs. Carr's next letter, written many months later, asks if Muir found Calypso 'for himself' in the north woods – the first intimation of the personal importance Mrs. Carr placed upon finding a rare and beautiful orchid.[336]

As Carr biographer Bonnie Gisel relates, during her youth Jeanne Carr had found the orchid *Cypripedium arietinum*, more commonly known as Lady's Slipper, and the discovery became a genesis encounter – the beginning of Carr's many important friendships born through mutual love of botany.[337] As

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[335] *John Muir Papers,* Letter to John Muir from Jeanne Carr, October 12, 1866.

[336] *John Muir Papers,* Letter to John Muir from Jeanne Carr, Madison, October 12, 1866.

[337] Bonnie J. Gisel, "Spiritual Intimacy: John Muir and Jeanne C. Carr" in *John Muir in Historical Perspective*, 38. Gisel notes that the young Jeanne was an enthusiastic botanist, and through the instruction and friendship of Professor William Tully of Castleton Medical College, developed many important friendships through her love of botany.

Gisel notes, Jeanne Carr hoped that John Muir would also find the same expanded spiritual connection with nature and friendships with kindred spirits through his finding of the rare Calypso orchid.[338]

The fall of 1866 was a turning point in the development of Muir's emerging ecosophy. His disclosure to Mrs. Carr regarding the sense of losing a sense of self during the Canadian autumn storm opened the door to a greater spiritual intimacy and exploration of thoughts through their correspondence. In a letter sent to Mrs. Carr, after his autumn storm revelation, Muir answered Mrs. Carr's earlier query regarding whether he had found the elusive Calypso orchid in Canada. Following soon after the disclosure of his mystical pine and storm experiences, Muir's description of finding the Calypso orchid further underscores the importance Muir's Canadian experiences within the context of his emerging ecosophy.

The written description of the Calypso discovery was not simply the recounting of a spiritually profound experience, but could also be viewed as a reinterpreted accounting, a 'construction' if you will, in response to Muir's growing spiritual and mentor-student-friend relationship with Mrs. Carr.[339] Muir's intention, at least in part, in writing this interpretation of his initial Calypso experience could well have been to create a medium in which he and Mrs. Carr could find greater spiritual congruency in their relationship to nature and the divine in nature. It was probably a combination of both elements; a true description of Muir's Calypso experience, but also written using language and spiritual metaphors that Muir knew resonated with Mrs. Carr.

Regardless of the reasons for Muir's constructed recollection of the Calypso experience a full two years after the fact, the religious and philosophical implications within the written description remain important elements is a discussion of how Muir's Canadian experiences influenced his life and thought. Muir did indeed find Calypso during his first lonely foray into the Canadian wilderness and to this experience he attributed a profound spiritual epiphany. The experience was, as he later recounted, "more memorable and impressive than any of my meetings with human beings excepting, perhaps, Emerson and one or two others."[340]

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[338] Ibid, 39.

[339] See Steven Holmes, *The Young John Muir: An Environmental Biography*, 139-40, and Bonnie J. Gisel, "Spiritual Intimacy: John Muir and Jeanne C. Carr" in *John Muir in Historical Perspective*, 39-40. In this interpretation of the Calypso experience, I am in agreement with Holmes and Gisel, the strong bond of friendship developing between Carr and Muir was deepened through sharing the spiritual elements of the Calypso experience.

From both a careful reading of Muir's Calypso experience as written to Mrs. Carr, and a discussion of the context in which it was written, certain elements of Muir's gradually unfolding personal ecosophy may be gleaned. To this end, I relate the entire text of Muir's written account of the Calypso meeting as a foundation for further discussion.

> I did find Calypso – but only once, far in the depths of the very wildest of Canadian dark woods, near those high, cold moss-covered swamps where most of the peninsular streams of Canada West take their rise.
>
> For several days in June I had been forcing my way through woods that seemed to become more and more dense, and among bogs more and more difficult to cross when, one warm afternoon, after descending a hillside covered with huge half-dead hemlocks, I crossed an ice-cold stream, and espied two specimens of Calypso. There, upon a plat of yellow moss, near an immense rotten log, were these little plants, so pure.
>
> They were alone. Not a vine was near, nor a blade of grass, nor a bush. Nor were there any birds or insects, for great blocks of ice lay screened from the summer's sun by deep beds of moss, and chilled the water. They were indeed alone, for the dull ignoble hemlocks were not companions, nor was the nearer arbor-vitae, with its root-like pendulous branches decaying confusedly on the wet, cold ground.
>
> I never before saw a plant so full of life; so perfectly spiritual, it seemed pure enough for the throne of its Creator. I felt as if I were in the presence of superior beings who loved me and beckoned me to come. I sat down beside them and wept for joy. Could angels in their better land show us a more beautiful plant? How good is our Heavenly Father in granting us such friends as are these plant-creatures, filling us wherever we go with pleasure so deep, so pure, so endless.
>
> I cannot understand the nature of the curse, "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee". Is our world indeed the worse for this "thistly curse?" Are not all plants beautiful? Or in some way useful? Would not the world suffer by the banishment of a single weed? The curse must be within ourselves.
>
> Give me this keen relish for simple pleasures, and he that will may monopolize the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life, --yea, all pomps and marvels of the world.[341]

This passage, with its complex intertwining of religious and philosophical thought is remarkable within the context of Muir's life during the Canadian period. The Calypso experience, thus described, is both illustrative of Muir's feelings during his first long-term wilderness foray, and is eloquent to his deepening spiritual relationship with nature; a relationship that recognized a plant as a being of value in and of itself.

Within the accounting of the Calypso experience, Muir intimated that he was feeling very much alone, having spent 'days' in deep woods and bogs. In his later autobiographical description, Muir recalled feelings of fatigue and fear at the prospect of a long night in the swamp. This palpable sense of unease, even subliminal fear of being alone in such a seemingly hostile environment created a highly emotional setting for the Calypso experience. The two beautiful orchids, found in an inhospitable place full of the 'dull', 'ignoble' and 'decaying' aspects of a cold and unfriendly wilderness, were a sight of such beauty and spiritual power that Muir was overcome with great emotion, and wept for joy at the sight of their flowering perfection. Muir referred to the Calypso orchids as superior beings, a manifestation of the love of God in nature providing deep and pure pleasure in natural beauty. This was, for Muir, a clear and undeniable sign of the divine manifest in nature, an epiphany that recognized value in these "plant creatures" because they so eloquently spoke to Muir of the love of God inherent within nature. Further, Muir also felt a sense of personal identification with these plants, for like himself they were alone amidst a cold and friendless environment, but as divinity manifest in nature they thrived with great beauty. If these lovely orchids could accomplish this then surely Muir could take heart within his own situation with the realization that the divine was ever near to succor him as well as his fellow 'plant-creatures.'[342]

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[340] W.F. Badè, *The Life and Letters of John Muir*, 71.

[341] W.F. Kimes and M.B. Kimes, *John Muir: A Reading Bibliography*, 1. This excerpt from a letter to Mrs. Jeanne Carr was published in the *Boston Recorder*, December 21, 1866 under the heading "For the Boston Recorder. THE CALYPSO BOREALIS. Botanical Enthusiasm. From Prof. J. D. Butler."

After recognizing the divine in nature embodied within the Calypso orchids, Muir then made a major philosophical leap that was the harbinger of his mature ecosophy. "Are not all plants beautiful?" he asked, "or in some ways useful?"[343] The question of being 'useful' in this case was not meant as a question of use for human beings, but for the plants themselves or a myriad of other 'uses' that nature may have for and within itself. Here Muir voiced a fledgling realization that use for human beings is not sole measure of 'use' or of value – an advancement of the foundational concept of intrinsic value. Thorns and thistles notwithstanding, to Muir nature in its entirety had intrinsic value simply and irrevocably through divine fiat, and nature as divine, or the divinity within nature encompasses the 'use' of any plant. For Muir, humanity's inability to recognize this truth was, as he put it, a 'curse…within ourselves'; an intimation of his growing realization and rejection of man-centred religious and cultural mores.

Muir's extension of personal relationship to the orchids was also critical to understanding his evolving personal ecosophy, for he viewed them as friends who loved him and beckoned him to come more deeply into nature. Muir made a critical step in his evolving personal ecosophy through this extension of relations – an extension that moved from an initial identification with the orchids towards identification with nature as a whole. He stopped short, however, of the full immersion of his self into nature, rather, he simply made the first critical step towards recognition of beings in nature that indicated a philosophical extension that negated both Cartesian man/nature separation and his conventional religious learning.

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[342] One of Muir's favorite hymns refers to "a friend who is ever near", a reference to the companionship and love Muir felt from the divine presence during his lonely wilderness wanderings.

[343] W.F. Kimes and M.B. Kimes, *John Muir: A Reading Bibliography*, 1.

Although never intended as such, the description of the Calypso experience also became the first words of Muir's ever published. At some point in late fall 1866, Mrs. Carr shared Muir's description of the Calypso experience with Professor J.D. Butler, who, without her knowledge or consent, took the letter and after adding a short introduction, had Muir's Calypso experience published in the Boston Recorder. While Mrs. Carr's indignation at such an affront was voiced in a subsequent letter, Muir did not express any such qualms, and indeed, later attributed the Calypso letter as having been sent to Professor Butler.[344] It is noteworthy, despite the convoluted route to print, that the first words of Muir's ever published were the result of a Canadian wilderness experience.

Muir's meeting of the Calypso orchid in Canada West was a peak wilderness experience – a spiritual epiphany that profoundly influenced his religious and philosophical worldview.[345] While there has been a tendency to define Muir's entire Canadian period by the Calypso experience, it is important to note that Muir's written description of the Calypso meeting did not occur until after he had left Canada West, and only then as part of a letter to his friend and mentor, Jeanne Carr. The first rather lacklustre reference to Muir's personal discovery of Calypso orchids, followed several months later by a highly spiritualized description of the event may actually indicate a shift in the perceived spiritual significance of the Calypso experience as a result of Muir's deepening spiritual friendship with Mrs. Carr. Or more probably, Muir may have reached a point where he felt sure enough of Mrs. Carr's understanding to fully disclose the profoundly spiritual Calypso event.

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[344] W.F. Badè, *The Life and Letters of John Muir*, 71.

[345] See also Stephen Fox, 43-44, Max Oelschlaeger, 92, and W.F Kimes and M.B. Kimes, 1. Fox states that the Calypso meeting "crystallized an attitude, providing the germ of an idea that would eventually dominate [Muir's] thinking" while Oelschlaeger suggests it was a hierophany, a revelation of a scared mystery "confirming …the unity of self with cosmos." Kimes refers to the Calypso description as "an early expression of his philosophy of the unity of all creation."

Further to these indications of Muir's personal evolving ecosophy are the implications of how Muir chose to express the Calypso epiphany in his letter to Mrs. Carr. As Holmes notes, Muir used Carr's imagery of plants as friends and reinterpreted the Calypso experience to further their deepening relationship.[346] In this sense, Muir may be seen as constructing his Calypso experience with the benefit of two years of interim insights as well his understanding of Carr's spiritual sensibilities. The Calypso experience, then, may be seen as both a wilderness epiphany as well as (in some ways) a constructed description melding the original event with two subsequent years of experience and thought, which included identification with Mrs. Carr's own nature spirituality.

After receiving the letter describing Muir's Calypso experience, Mrs. Carr expressed her gladness that Muir had found the Calypso orchid and that he deserved to find it [347] In concert with Mrs. Carr's wish for Muir to find 'for himself' the beautiful Calypso orchid was her wish for him to read a personally loved and inspirational book, The Stone Mason of Saint Point.[348] As Bonnie Gisel relates, the Stone Mason had a profound effect upon Mrs. Carr, for in tandem with Muir's Calypso epiphany, Mrs. Carr felt that the book provided a revelation of Muir's true calling, as one of God's 'chosen' to work in service to God through his love of nature.[349] In December, Mrs. Carr sent her own copy of Lamartine's book, hoping that the example of the stone mason would help clarify Muir's vocational confusion.

The Stone Mason of Saint Point is comprised of two distinct but interrelating aspects; one part addressing the humble and tragic life of the Claude des Huttes, the stone mason, and the other part a treatise of nature piety heavily influenced by romanticism.[350] The stone mason lived and worked with direct and experiential joy in nature as the divine manifest on earth. Embracing a Christian piety and strong sense of duty to others, Claude lived a simple, humble life in the service of others. At the heart of the story, the stone mason embraced the unity of creation through a deep sensitivity and empathy to nature and recognition of God manifest in nature. Asked what he loved besides his fellow man and God, the stone mason related the scope of his love of nature, including both inanimate and animate expressions of God's work. "I feel a foolish tenderness that I can not conquer, for all the rest of creation…who are formed of the same flesh under other forms…I feel it also for trees, flowers and mosses that do not move from their place, and do not appear to think, but live and die there round me on the earth…"[351] Extending his love to the stars, the mountain tops and ravines, the stone mason embraced all of nature as familial.

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[346] Steven Holmes, *The Young John Muir,* 139-40.

[347] *John Muir Papers,* Letter to John Muir from Jeanne Carr, Madison, Dec. 16, 1866.

[348] Alphonse de Lamartine, *The Stone Mason of Saint Point: A Village Tale*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1851)

[349] Bonnie Johanna Gisel, "Spiritual Intimacy: John Muir and Jeanne C. Carr" in *John Muir in Historical Perspective*, 46-7. The life of the stone mason exemplified a merging of faith and nature, and spiritual instruction imbued with an understanding of the unity of creation. As Gisel notes, Carr's love of the book focused on the stone mason's devotion to his calling, his love of nature and his deep personal relation with divine Creation.

[350] Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy,* 82. As Worster notes, the romantic view of nature included "a search for holistic or integrated perception, an emphasis on interdependence and relatedness in nature, and an intense desire to restore man to a place of intimate intercourse with the vast organism that constitutes the earth."

> Have we not, as I sometimes say to myself, a true relationship with this earth whence we spring, whither we shall return, which bears us, which gives us drink and food, like our nurse?…Is there not between her and us a true relationship of body, so that when we take up a handful of sand, or a clod of earth from the hillocks which have borne our weight, we can say to this grain of sand, "Thou art my brother;" and to that clod of earth, "Thou art my mother or sister?"[352]

As an expression of romanticism's intent to emphasize the relationship between humanity and nature and to bring about a deep knowing and intimacy between people and the earth, the Stone Mason is eloquent. For Mrs. Carr, inured to the teachings of the romantics and Emersonian transcendentalism, the story of the stone mason resonated with her own spiritual beliefs. After reading Muir's description of the Calypso epiphany, Mrs. Carr became even more convinced that the life of the stone mason could provide a perfect template for Muir's life and a resolution to his chronic indecision. Muir's ecstatic recognition of the divine manifested through the Calypso orchid, and his rejection of the 'pomps and marvels' of the world in turn for 'simple pleasures' certainly mirrored the stone mason's adoption of a humble existence and spiritual affinity with the divine expressed in creation.

Although Muir read the Stone Mason during the winter of 1866-67, his specific thoughts on its contents are unknown. In a letter to Mrs. Carr in April 1867, Muir returned the book with a note stating he had read it "with a great deal of pleasure… and will write my thoughts upon it when I can."[353] There is no existing letter from Muir that describes his thoughts on the Stone Mason; however, both Holmes and Gisel view the book as an important influence in Muir's life. Holmes suggests that Muir adopted many of the Stone Mason's images and motifs in his later writing, and Bonnie Gisel states that "the voice of the stone mason resonated in his [Muir's] journal entries" during the thousand mile walk to the Gulf of Mexico.[354] While I hesitate to attribute to the Stone Mason the extent of influence that Holmes and Gisel describe, I do suggest that the book served as a critically timed and reinforced (by Mrs. Carr) validation of the intuitive and imaginative relationship that Muir had already experienced in nature. Remember, Muir had already experienced the Calypso epiphany before he read the Stone Mason, and more importantly, had experienced a mystical losing of self in the pine tree's worshipful dance with autumn storms, a critical experience that foreshadowed the intense wilderness mysticism of his Yosemite years. These noteworthy experiences were of course added to Muir's childhood nature immersion experiences in Scotland and Wisconsin. When we try to pick one part out as being the critical influential point in a life, we find it hitched to a myriad of other influences and experiences that are also relationally and influentially important. The Canadian period is full of these experiences and influences, but does not stand alone within the total context of Muir's life. It was a period, however, in which we can see glimmers and intimations of Muir's mature ecosophy.

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[351] Alphonse de Lamartine, *The Stone Mason of Saint Point – A Village Tale*, 47, 49.

[352] Ibid. 49.

[353] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Jeanne Carr, April 3, 1867.

Central to Muir's emerging ecosophy was his growing recognition of intrinsic value in nature through divine fiat, a realization that suffused the Calypso epiphany. Embedded within the romantic cosmology of Humboldt and manifested in the written account of the Calypso experience, Muir's recognition and acceptance of value in nature for its own sake, and the natural extension of relational empathy for all in nature threaded though the Canadian period. In his empathy with the plight of such creatures as spiders, flies and small birds, Muir's nascent intuition of intrinsic value in all creatures continued to grow. He had also felt himself an insignificant 'animalcula' of nature – an arguable refutation of human species arrogance and prerequisite for a non-anthropocentric worldview. All of this occurred before Muir read the Stone Mason of Saint Point, and most certainly contributed to the thoughts and intuitions expressed in Muir's journal entries during the thousand mile walk to the Gulf of Mexico.

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[354] For examples see Bonnie Gisel, 48-9, and Steven Holmes, *The Young John Muir,* 172-3, 185, 191n, 197n. Both Gisel and Holmes tie Lamartine's book to Muir's way of relating to the natural world, in that the stone mason modeled a life of experiencing God in nature, and a deeply spiritual and ethical relationship with nature.

Throughout the remainder of the winter of 1866-67, Muir continued to work in for Osgood & Smith, still intent on making his 'mark' in invention. He also spent a great deal of time during the fall and winter mulling over maps and dreaming of tropical exploration.[355] Although the problem of funding for his long held Humboldtian dream was now less acute, Muir continued to work at Osgood & Smith. By January 1867 Muir had decided "to take things a little easier in the shop and shirk heavy work still more", an indication that he was financially more secure and loathe to risk his health in overwork.[356] His love of botany remained strong, with interest in new ferns and mosses expressed in letters to both Daniel and Harriet Trout.[357] He had, however, become rather bored during the long winter months in Indianapolis. "Times are dull" he wrote to Dan, but did not relate any concrete plans for release from that dullness.[358] Rather, he talked about the nice room he had, decorated with his sketches, including a framed sketch of Trout Hollow that he felt looked 'natural.'[359] Once again, the dichotomous nature of Muir's life, the love of a warm and comfortable home vied with his dream of unfettered exploration and immersion in Nature.

Turning points in Muir's life at times arrived with the advent of calamity; his entry into the University of the Wilderness was due in great part to the Civil War, and his leave-taking from Trout Hollow followed the catastrophic millfire. In early March 1867 while working in the shop, Muir was endeavoring to pull the laces from a machine belt with a file when his hand slipped and the sharp file point punctured his right eye on the outer edge of the cornea. The accident would prove to be the final catalyst to follow his dream of being a naturalist, an explorer of nature as close to the Humboldtian model as possible.

Directly after the accident, Muir was stricken with the loss. "Friends, I have lost an eye…no more of lovely scenery, not any more of beauty would ever pass the portal of my right eye. It is lost."[360] Confined to a darkened room for a long and tedious recovery Muir had plenty of time to contemplate his future.

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[355] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Merrill Family, Indianapolis, March 4, 1867.

[356] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Daniel Muir, Ind'., January 13th, 1867.

[357] Ibid. See also "The John Muir Letters to his Meaford Friends." Letter from John Muir to Harriet Trout, January 6th, 1867.

[358] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Daniel Muir, January 13, 1867.

[359] "John Muir Letters to his Meaford Friends." Letter from John Muir to Harriet Trout, January 6th, 1867.

[360] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to the Merrill and Moore families, March 6, 1867.

Although the accident was traumatic, it would be the enforced convalescence and time for reflection that marked a shift in Muir's personal impetus to seriously embrace his dream of being an explorer of nature.

During the month following the accident, Muir's convalescence was brightened by the letters of condolence and encouragement from many of his friends. Children of his Indianapolis acquaintances read to him and brought handfuls of his favorite wildflowers to cheer his 'immense blank days.' Mrs. Carr, the Butler family, the Merrill and Moore families of Indianapolis and the Trout family all expressed concern and support for his recovery. The outpouring of friendship was balm for Muir's state of mind, and gave him cause to reflect on past kindness. "You lived in your letters & stood by me as ready" he wrote to his Trout and Jay friends, "I never was insensible to your kindness but it comes with keener power upon a poor tremulous mortal stricken so fast..."[361] Suffering from terrible dreams, Muir admitted to the Trout Hollow family that he hated being alone "just from silly fear" and wished that Hattie could read to him, a signal that he was thankful for the friendship and solace she too had offered.[362] Despite the efforts to cheer his convalescence, Muir eventually began to chaff at the enforced bedrest. "My hard toil-tempered muscles have disappeared and I am feeble and tremulous as an ever-sick woman" he griped, but by early April he had recovered enough strength for short walks in the nearby woods.[363]

In a letter of support and encouragement soon after Muir's accident, Mrs. Carr proffered a message of hope to combat the misfortune. "Dear John" she wrote, " I have often in my heart wondered what God was training you for. He gave you the eye within the eye to see in all natural objects the realized ideas of His mind."[364] In her reference to Muir's ability to see the divine in nature and that God had a plan for him, Mrs. Carr helped to alleviate Muir's own doubts as to the fulfillment of his inner dreams. "The Cordilleras & the Amazon will stay in their places, they are waiting..." she wrote, "...You will take a richer heart, and a clearer mind with which to interpret them, for this retirement."[365] Mrs. Carr knew Muir well enough to offer the best encouragement she could at this time of extremity – the promise that he could still realize his deepest wish to become not only an explorer of nature but also continue the spiritual quest for a more profound relationship with nature.

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[361] "The John Muir Letters to his Meaford Friends", Meaford Museum, Meaford, Ontario. Letter from John Muir to "Friends", Indianapolis, April, 4th, 1867.

[362] Ibid. This reference to Hattie may also have been a way for Muir to tell Harriet Trout that she was a valued friend, in the hope that this would overcome his earlier rejection of her romantic overture.

[363] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Jeanne Carr, April 3rd, 1867.

[364] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from Jeanne Carr to John Muir, Madison, March 15th, 1867.

[365] Ibid.

As the sight in Muir's right eye recovered, he began to extend his walks, and with renewed physical strength came hope for the future. By early May he was "more anxious to travel than ever", an indication that his priorities had shifted away from the industrial shops towards the green fields and forests.[366] Despite his earlier vow to the his Trout and Jay friends, "…now that our factory has marked me, I feel like making a good Scottish mark upon it before I lift my hand elsewhere", Muir did not return to work in mechanics.[367] On June 10th he turned his back on the smoke and din of Indianapolis, and with the companionship of his young friend, Merrill Moores, set out on a botanical walk through Illinois to his family home in Wisconsin.

During this long summer walk through the flowery fields of Illinois and Wisconsin, and the family visits and botanical explorations made in July and August, Muir gradually recuperated from the psychic trauma and humbling physical disability of the eye accident. Over the summer months, he went through a process of renewal, or rebirth, not only in physical strength, but more importantly in a deeply felt relationship with the natural landscape.[368] As part of the evolution of his personal ecosophy, this rather idyllic summer spent botanizing in childhood haunts not only provided Muir with the opportunity to use scientific observation to gain deeper insight into the diversity and unity of nature, but deepened his intuitive perceptions of intrinsic value in nature.

Indicative of this deeper knowing, Muir's walk through the fields of Illinois was particularly illuminating. At one point, born of his interest in the diversity and plentitude of grasses and sedges, Muir walked a straight line for one hundred yards, at each step gathering and lying in his hand as he came upon them, a grass or sedge. Muir was astounded to find that he had gathered one hundred plants, arranged as he stressed in "Nature's own way." More surprising to Muir was the exceptional beauty of the bouquet in its own natural setting. "I looked at my grass bouquet by chance – was startled – held it at arms length in sight of its own near and distant scenery and companion flowers – my discovery was compete and I was delighted beyond measure with the new and extreme beauty…"[369] The flash of recognition of the inter-related fitness of this bouquet of grasses within the context of its right and natural place in the Illinois prairie spoke clearly to Muir of a divine plan in all nature.

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[366] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Jean Carr, Ind', May 2nd, 1867.

[367] "The John Muir Letters to his Meaford Friends", Letter from John Muir to "Friends", Indianapolis, April 4th, 1867.

[368] Stephen Holmes, *The Young John Muir,* 150-58. Holmes provides a detailed accounting of the psychological factors that went into this summer of 'rebirth' for Muir. Included in these factors are Muir's skills at botanical observation, connection with Mrs. Carr on both emotional and spiritual levels, religious imagery and awareness of God both seen and felt in nature all helped Muir integrate the diversity of his personality and experiences.

> Can it be that a single flower or weed, or grass in all these prairies occupies a chance position, can it be that the folding or curvature of a single leaf is wrong or undetermined in these gardens that God is keeping.
>
> The most microscopic portion of plants are beautiful in themselves, and these are beautiful combined into individuals and undoubtedly all are woven with equal care into one harmonious beautiful whole.[370]

For Muir, the Calypso epiphany – the deep realization of the divine manifest within the orchid, and of intrinsic value inherent within it by virtue of divine fiat was now extended to include the whole landscape and companion flowers of the grass and sedge bouquet. All was divinely planned, all plant parts large, microscopic, communitarian, cosmological in one harmonious whole Muir saw as beautiful in themselves. This was another clear indication of Muir's emerging ecosophical position of intrinsic value in nature during these important and transitional years of his life.

Further, Muir's own emphasis by underlining key phrases indicates the importance he placed on these observations. Nature's "own way" of arranging, both at the immediate and landscape levels spoke clearly to Muir of the divine plan ordering and harmonizing the whole. There was, in this passage, an implicit recognition of value in nature's own way of ordering, where not a leaf was out of place in all the gardens that God kept. Muir saw that value in nature, through the beauty of divine ordering, was intrinsic to nature simply through the divine manifested in nature – there was value in nature by the all encompassing and simple reason of divine fiat.

It is also evident from this passage that Muir remained panentheistic in his religious views. God, although recognized as ordering the beauty of nature, retained an overarching divine presence. Muir did not yet see God as nature, nor nature God as is the case with pantheism. Muir still saw God as separate and primary at this point, though the divine was recognized as having immanent manifestation in the order and beauty of nature.[371]

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[369] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Jeanne Carr, August 1867.

[370] Ibid.

Another crucial aspect to this summer of healing was Muir's growing sense of dependence upon nature as solace and support. Holmes very clearly describes this transitional development in his discussion of Muir's growing trust and confidence in both God and nature, and the sense of reciprocated love between Muir and the Wisconsin landscape he feels embraced and loved by in turn.[372] What is so important about this felt reciprocity is that Muir moved from mere empathy to a deeper felt sense of protection and love emanating from nature itself. By this extension of a deeply felt relationship, Muir began to experience the natural world as benign and much like a protective and loving entity.[373] Interestingly, Muir's favorite hymn contained the phrase "there is a friend who is ever near" which suggests that he had earlier, during his Canadian sojourn, drawn comfort from the concept of friendship within the felt presence of the divine.[374] That divine presence, manifested in nature, trustworthy and reassuring in times of loneliness and doubt, and viewed as a supportive friend, became foundational to Muir's deep sense of trust and willingness to fully immerse in wild nature. As Deep Ecology philosopher Warwick Fox notes, "Over time, steadfast friendliness often comes to be experienced by the recipient as a deep form of love precisely because it does not cling or cloy but rather gives the recipient "room to move," room to be themselves."[375] With the felt presence of friendship within the divine in nature, Muir's own personal relationship with nature gave him room to be himself, to finally address the Humboldtian dream to explore and study nature freely, without fear.

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[371] Max Oeschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness, 123.* Oelschlaeger discusses how panentheism is only a "difference in degree, not in kind, from theism, since God remains separate and primary.

[372] Steven Holmes, *The Young John Muir,* 154-55.

[373] Ibid. 154. Holmes posits a psychological interpretation of Muir's relationship with nature during the summer of 1867 as a complex interweaving of several variables. The crisis of the eye accident, physical disability, disruption of masculine identity, and Muir's own adaptation of his father's insistence on complete trust of God's will (as written in the Scriptures) into a personal trust in nature and God (the Book of Nature) - all contributed to the sense of reciprocity of love and care between nature and Muir.

[374] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from Mary Trout to John Muir, Hallam, March 28, 1867. After hearing of Muir's eye accident, Mary wrote "When I was reflecting on your condition and what you would be drawing comfort from the first that entered my thoughts was your favorite hymn "There's a friend that's ever near.""

[375] Warwick Fox, "Transpersonal Ecology and the Varieties of Identification" in *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology*, Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue, eds. (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1995), 143-44.

Writing to Mrs. Carr at the end of August, Muir had reached some sort of decision as to what to do, but was vague about the intent of his desires and his destination. "I wish I knew where I was going – doomed to be "carried of the spirit into the wilderness" I suppose. I wish I could be more moderate in my desires but I cannot & so there is no rest."[376] Although he intimates that he is 'carried of the spirit', it is important to remember that he did spend a significant amount of time going over maps during the previous winter, and that a Humboldtian tropical destination was always hovering within his map ruminations. Drawn by his own unquenchable dream to be a explorer of nature, Muir started out on his thousand mile walk to the Gulf of Mexico in early September, 1865 with the intent of eventually sailing for South America. By this time, Muir was much better equipped, emotionally, spiritually and financially for this second voluntary immersion into wilderness – a legacy of the combined influences and experiences of his life, including the Canadian period.

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[376] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Jeanne Carr, Indianapolis, August 30, 1867.

CHAPTER 4

The Stikine River – Glaciers, Gold Fields and the Expansion of Vision

Introduction

John Muir left Meaford, in what would become the province of Ontario, in March 1866, and did not return to Canada until June 1879. In the thirteen intervening years, the early intimations of a powerful wilderness mysticism had evolved into foundational elements of Muir's mature ecosophy. This chapter addresses Muir's rich and memorable experiences while exploring the Stikine River region of north-western British Columbia, and how these experiences stemmed from and contributed to his evolving ecosophy.

Muir's Canadian experience in 1879 was short – a four week period from July 28th to the end of August. Within this abbreviated time frame, Muir managed two trips up the Stikine River to the head of navigation at Telegraph Creek, a 200-mile round trip walk into the interior reaches of the Stikine and Dease River watersheds, two ascents of Mount Glenora, and his first extended study of two magnificent northern glaciers. Along the way, he enjoyed the hospitality of colorful Canadian frontiersmen, observed and recorded his impressions of the Tahltan aboriginal people, studied evidence of ancient volcanic and glacial made landscapes, explored a portion of the Cassiar gold fields, and rescued a friend from a mountain climbing accident. Underlying all of this was the emotional tension of coming to terms with the reality of a patiently waiting fiancée in California – a life-altering personal commitment that underscored the intensity of this last free and unencumbered immersion into pure wilderness. Within all of these contexts – historical, natural and personal, Muir's 1879 Canadian experience contributed to his understanding of glaciology and landscape formation, provided some interesting insights into his emotional life, and through experiential immersion in Canadian ice, flowers, rivers and forests – deepened his ecosophical vision of nature.

Flowers to Ice – expansion of ecosophical vision

The gradual expansion of Muir's geographic experiences and intuitive empathy with wild nature reverberated through the unfolding of ecosophy 'M'. From his early love of botany and the wider philosophical questioning during the thousand-mile walk to the Gulf of Mexico, to the unique mixture of wilderness mysticism and natural science during his years in the High Sierras, the expansion of Muir's cosmological vision is evident through both time and space.[377]

Throughout the 1870's, Muir expanded the scope of his scientific study from botany to questions of landscape formation. Muir became enthralled with what he saw as the divine and creative power of glaciation evident in the Sierra Nevadas, and particularly in the formation of Yosemite Valley. By 1871 Muir had published his first article on the topic of Yosemite's glaciers, sparking a long and contentious debate with J.D. Whitney, State Geologist of California, over the geological creation of Yosemite Valley.[378] Muir's knowledge of glacial action in the Yosemite and its tributaries was gleaned during a period of intense wilderness immersion and his increasingly sophisticated powers of observation; a melding of intuition, aesthetic appreciation and careful empirical science. Whitney rejected Muir's theory of Yosemite's glacial origin as the uninformed work of an upstart amateur. Muir, however, persisted with his glacial theory, not only winning converts within scientific circles but also capturing the imagination of the public with articles published in both eastern and western monthlies.[379]

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[377] Michael Dettelbach, "Introduction to the 1997 Edition" in Alexander von Humboldt, *Cosmos: A Sketch of a Physical Description of the Universe*, vol. 2, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), xxxi – xxxi. Dettalbach states "…Humboldt's historical investigations also revealed that the mind advances toward a Humboldtian comprehension of the universe in a Humboldtian fashion, by a process of geographical expansion. The gradual realization of the universe as a cosmos is marked by epochal extensions of range, quantity, and variety of our perceptions…" Muir followed this Humboldtian extension of perception through his own geographical extension of experience, and the accompanying extension of his own comprehension of the cosmos.

[378] For an in-depth discussion of Muir's contribution to geological science see Dennis R. Dean, "Muir and Geology", in *John Muir: Life and Work*, 170, and Keith Burich, "Josiah Dwight Whitney, John Muir, and Clarence King, and the "Chasm of the Yosemite" in *John Muir in Historical Perspective*, 165. Muir's first article on glaciation was published in the *New York Tribune*, December 5, 1871. Published anonymously, the article sparked a heated debate between Muir's theory of glacial origin versus Whitney's theory that the valley bottom literally 'dropped out' in a sudden cataclysmic event during the formation of the Sierra Nevadas.

[379] Dennis R. Dean, "Muir and Geology", in *John Muir: Life and Work*, 169. Dean notes a total of fourteen articles by Muir within a bibliography of American Geology, not counting the first anonymous article published in 1871.

Muir's study of glaciation in Yosemite and the Sierra Nevada extended his perceptions and his experience with both landscape and nature in true Humboldtian form. Not only did he open his perceptions of the cosmos through the exploration of greater geographic areas, but also melded scientific discovery with a deep emotional resonance to the High Sierra landscape.

> The forces that shaped the mountains – grinding out canyons and lake-basins, sharpening peaks and crests, bringing domes into relief, from the enclosing rocks, carving their plain flanks into their present forms – may still be seen at work at many points in the High Sierra…As I gazed, notwithstanding the kindly sunshine, the waving of grass, and the humming of flies, the stupendous canyon, with its far-reaching branches, seemed to fill again with creeping ice, winding in sublime curves around massive mountain brows, its white surface sprinkled with gray boulders, and traversed with many a yawning crevasse…Exhilarated by the divine wildness that imbued mountain and sky, I could not help shouting as I bounded down the topmost curves of the canyon…[380]

Muir worked freely through intuition, imagination and observable quantifiable evidence, modelling the 19th century reconciliation between science and the aesthetic through his own unique melding of fact and value.[381] As discussed in Chapter Two, Muir was proto-ecological, engaging in the *process* of aesthetic and scientific discovery and study, and allowing the multi-contextual complexities of his life and of wild nature infuse his evolving ecosophy.

Further to Muir's melding of science and aesthetics, his shift from a panentheistic religious perspective to a pantheist wilderness mysticism also marked a gradual evolution in his ecosophical foundations.[382] Working through a long transitional process, Muir saw evidence of the divine in nature during his Canadian years; Calypso was a being 'perfectly spiritual…pure enough for the throne of its Creator', and during the walk to the Gulf of Mexico; all was 'divine harmony'. By 1873, after years of immersion in the foothills and mountains of the High Sierras, Muir saw Nature as God incarnate, and his writing became infused with pantheist wilderness spirituality. "All of these varied forms, high and low, are simply portions of God radiated from Him as a sun, and made terrestrial by the clothes they wear, and by the modifications of a corresponding kind in the God essence itself."[383] For Muir, God, Beauty and Nature had become synonymous.

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[380] Linnie Marsh Wolf, *John of the Mountains*, 71. This particular quote is part of an article "Explorations in the Great Tuolumne Canyon" that Muir had published in the *Overland Monthly*, August 1873.

[381] Eugene C. Hargrove, *Foundations of Environmental Ethics*, 84. Hargrove states that 19th century natural history scientists used aesthetic judgements alongside factual descriptions and thus attended to values as well as facts, which in turn propagated attitudes appreciative of nature.

[382] Max Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness*, 186-93. Oelschlaeger provides a discussion of Muir's gradual movement towards a more panthiest wilderness theology.

> No synonym for God is so perfect as Beauty. Whether as seen carving the lines of the mountains with glaciers, or gathering matter into stars, or planning the movements of water, or gardening – still all is Beauty![384]

Long term immersion in Beauty/God/Nature had also erased any physical, emotional, spiritual or intellectual separation between Muir and wild nature. As Holmes explains, "In the years that followed, Muir drew upon a whole range of resources and tactics – intellectual, symbolic, emotional, behavioural, imaginative relational – in a conscious and creative attempt to "assimilate" his natural surroundings into the deepest dimensions of his being, "…into the spirit & into the common earth of [his] existence."[385] This process was a natural progression, which included within a continuum of experience Muir's mystical loss of sense of self experienced in Canada through the 'converse' of a wild autumn storm and majestic pine. All of these life experiences were assimilated and continually enriched Muir's evolving ecosophy.

By 1879, Muir had also resolved many of the questions that had plagued him during the years in Canada West, Indianapolis, the thousand-mile walk to the Gulf, and the early years in California. The realization that he could support himself as a professional writer finally laid Muir's chronic vocational indecision to rest. Writing articles for eastern monthlies and working as a touring newspaper correspondent not only assured financial solvency but began to build Muir's public identity as a nature writer and natural scientist.[386] Success as a writer also created a demand for Muir as a lecturer, an endeavour at which he both excelled and dreaded.[387] By 1874 he was well known for his glacial articles and nature essays, even in his old Sierra haunts. "Strange to say the *Overland* studies have been read and discussed in the most unlikely places. Some numbers have found their way through the Bloody Canyon pass to Mono" he wrote to Jeanne Carr with surprise.[388]

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[383] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 138.

[384] Ibid. 208.

[385] Steven J. Holmes, *The Young John Muir*, 211.

[386] W.F Kimes and M.B. Kimes, *John Muir: A Reading Bibliography.* Throughout the 1870's Muir's articles were published in the *New York Daily Tribune*, *The Overland Monthly,* the San Francisco *Daily Evening Bulletin, Harper's New Monthly Magazine, the California Horiculturist and Flora Magazine,* the *Proceedings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, The Pacific School and Home Journal,* and *Scribner's Monthly.*

[387] Stephen Fox, *The American Conservation Movement,* 79. Later in his life, Muir would draft an explanation of why he was unable to deliver a public address, describing himself as likely to 'bolt like a frightened wild animal' and that any ceremonious formality would 'frighten him dumb.'

The early intense need to 'be a Humboldt' had been greatly assuaged by Muir's immersion in the wilderness of the Sierras, where the expansion of his scientific interest and personal resonance with the wild had opened up avenues of empirical and spiritual exploration. Following a Humboldtian mode of extension of perception through wider geographical experience, Muir gradually extended his range of exploration beyond Yosemite and its immediate region into the southern Sierras, Nevada and Utah. As early as September 1874 it was apparent that the valley and immediate area no longer sufficed for the scope of his studies. "Surely this Merced and Tuolumne chapter of my life is done" he wrote to Jeanne Carr with mixed feelings, knowing that his glacial studies required wider empirical evidence to support his theory of the glaciated origins of yosemetic type valleys.[389] Thereafter, he extended his explorations into the southern Sierras, most notably into the King's River Canyon environs, and to other points in the Sierra Nevadas, including Mt. Shasta, Lake Tahoe, and the Yuba and Feather River regions.

By 1875, Muir's years of ecstatic immersion and communion with wild nature had been tempered with observations of the rapidly spreading 'improvements' of civilization. He began to write of the devastation of over-grazing, of the felling of the gigantic Sequoias and the need for preservation of the forests from rampant over-cutting.[390] Finding his voice in literary activism, Muir did not hesitate to press government for intervention in the destruction of forests. His nature articles were often punctuated with warnings of the threat of man's heedless destruction and waste. "It appears…" Muir wrote regarding the Sequoia gigantea, "…that notwithstanding our forest king might live on gloriously in Nature's keeping, it is rapidly vanishing before the fire and steel of man; and unless protective measures be speedily invented and applied in a few decades at the farthest, all that will be left of Sequoia gigantea will be a few hacked and scarred monuments."[391]

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[388] W.F. Badè, *Life and Letters of John Muir*, 200. Letter from John Muir to Jeanne Carr, Yosemite Valley, September 1874.

[389] Muir used the "Yosemitic" or "Yosemites" to depict glacial carved landscapes – a descriptive analogy that he used throughout the Sierras, and later into his British Columbia and Alaska explorations.

[390] W.F Kimes and M.B. Kimes, *John Muir: A Reading Bibliography,* 16. The first article Muir wrote fully addressing the growing problem of both grazing and cutting was published in the Sacramento *Daily Union* February 5, 1876 was titled "God's First Temples. How Shall We Preserve Our Forests? The Question Considered by John Muir, California Geologist – The Views of a Practical Man and a Scientific Observer – A Profoundly Interesting Article. (Communicated To The Record Union)."

During the 1870's, Muir's need for human companionship had been met, at least in part, by the steady stream of academics that Jeanne Carr had encouraged to visit Muir in Yosemite, and by periodically spending winter months in San Francisco writing, living and visiting with friends and their families. In addition to these supportive and intellectually stimulating relationships, in 1874 Muir met Louie Strentzel, the daughter of noted horticulturist and Martinez rancher, Dr. John Theophile Strentzel and his wife, Louisianna. From the fall of 1877 and into the spring of 1878, Muir visited Martinez with increasing frequency, and his relationship with Louie gradually developed into an abiding attachment. Long skittish of romantic affiliations and the 'slavish fear' of marriage, at the age of 40 Muir finally began to seriously contemplate the benefits of a home complete with wife and family.

Throughout the winter of 1878, trips to Martinez aside, Muir followed a now familiar routine, living with a friend, Isaac Upham, in San Fransciso and working on articles for *Scribner's Monthly* and the *Daily Evening Bulletin*. The articles of 1878-79 readily illustrate the range of writing he engaged in: poetic naturalist essays sprinkled liberally with natural science, journalistic reports on the economic status of mining towns, and strident denunciations of forest destruction by "…fires, sheep and the axe…"[392] He continued to write about the landscape creating powers of the vanished Sierran glaciers, describing meadows, passes, and lakes and valleys as "fine preachers and interpreters of their ancient grandeur…"[393]

Muir scholars have already noted the importance of glaciology to Muir.[394] It is, however, worth reiterating that Muir's prolific glacial writing was not only used to punctuate his early glacial origin theory with further empirical evidence in the Sierras (a need spurred by the scepticism and ridicule he received from Whitney and others) but was also an evangelical cause with distinct spiritual and imaginative contexts. Muir's 'glacial gospel' spoke not only to his powers of scientific observation, but also to how he imaginatively and spiritually *experienced* the power of glaciers as creative expressions of God.[395]

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[391] Ibid. 18. John Muir, "On the Post-Glacial History of Sequoia Gigantea. " *Proceedings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science*, May 1877, v. 25, 242-243.

[392] Ibid. 25. "Great Evils from Destruction of Forests", San Francisco Real Estate Circular, April 1879.

[393] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 88. See also Kimes, 22-3.

[394] Paul D. Sheats, "John Muir's Glacial Gospel" in *John Muir: Life and Legacy*, The Pacific Historian Vol. 29, No. 2 & 3, (Stockton: University of the Pacific for the Holt-Atherton Centre for Western Studies, 1985) 42. See also Dean, Dennis R. Dean, "Muir and Geology" in *John Muir: Life and Work*, and Michael Cohen, *The Pathless Way*.

> When I look on a glacier, I see the immeasurable sunbeams pouring faithfully on the outspread oceans, and the streaming, uprising vapors entering cool mountain basins and taking their places in the divinely beautiful six-rayed daisies of snow that go sifting, glinting to their appointed places on the sky-piercing mountains, joining ray to ray, forming glaciers amid the boom and thunder of avalanches, and at last flowing serenely back to the sea.[396]

Glaciology expanded Muir's ecosophical vision of nature. He saw everything in nature through a glacial filter, not only viewing the power of ice as God's pre-eminent tool in landscape formation but also as cosmological vision of a divine and universal process. He saw glaciers as created entities, something existent and recognizable at that moment, but he also saw glaciers as a creative force, agents of a divine harmonious unfolding. For Muir, glaciers were divine in themselves as created entities of God, but also as the divine progenitors of the intricate web of the meadows, forests, streams, granite peaks and wildflowers that he knew and loved so deeply. Through a deep intuitive and imaginative knowing, Muir saw the created and the creative aspects of glaciers as a unifying aspect of the divine in all of nature. In this, Muir imbued the mysticism that was so much a part of his deep ecosophical knowing of nature. With his intuitive, imaginative leap into the life and work of glaciers, Muir realized a universal unity in all creation that erased the dualism of heaven and earth, body and spirit, God and the world.

> There are no harsh, hard dividing lines in nature. Glaciers blend with the snow and the snow blends with the thin invisible breath of the sky. So there is no stiff, frigid, stony partition wall betwixt us and heaven. There are blendings as immeasurable and untraceable as the edges of melting clouds...earth is partly heaven, and heaven earth.[397]

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[395] Paul D. Sheats, "John Muir's Glacial Gospel in *John Muir: Life and Legacy*, 42-53. Sheat's discussion on Muir's 'glacial gospel' describes the evangelical quality of Muir's almost obsessive focus on glaciation as a central tenet of divine creative force in landscape formation.

[396] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 317.

[397] Ibid. 89. From "Sierra Fragments" written in the Tuolumne Divide, August 21st, 1872.

Going home… to the ice & forests & flowers…[398]

If contemporary geological theories on the formation of Yosemite Valley and High Sierra landscape now find Muir too fixated on ice to the exclusion of other geological events, it remains that Muir was more nearly right than his contemporaries, including his chief critic, J.D. Whitney.[399] The strength of Muir's adherence to his own theories and observations of Yosemite glacial work took on the mantle of an evangelical cause, and Muir took every opportunity to expound on his 'glacial gospel' and win converts to his Yosemite glacial theories.[400] It was not surprising, therefore, that Muir accepted an invitation to deliver two lectures on Yosemite glaciers at Sunday School Convention in Yosemite in June 1879. The lectures and associated naturalist tours were a success, but for Muir, they underscored the need to find further proof of his theories by observing large living glaciers. The glacial lessons of Yosemite and the High Sierra had been plumbed dry, and for some time Muir had been considering leaving California to "gain some knowledge of the regions to the northward about Puget Sound and Alaska."[401]

Further to Muir's personal wish to study living glaciers, the impetus for him to venture northward was more than likely piqued by an article in the April 1879 publication of *Scribner's Monthly*. Although Muir never refers to of the *Scribners* article, "The Stickeen River and Its Glaciers" by W.H. Bell, it is highly unlikely that while living and working in San Franscisco that spring he did not have the opportunity to read the publication.[402] Further, having consecutively published his own glacier-related articles in *Scribner's* from November 1878 to March 1879, Bell's glacier article would certainly have roused Muir's interest.

W.H. Bell's article is worth noting for several reasons. For the glacier-starved Muir, the description of the voyage up the Stikine River to the head of navigation at Glenora, and the boat party's exploration along the terminal moraine and onto the massive expanse of the 'Great Glacier' of the Stikine could well have been galvanizing. Bell's account of the multitude of glaciers, the wild scenery of river, mountain and vegetation would have supported Muir's resolve to head northward, and his observations of the Great Glacier would have resonated with Muir's deep spiritual affinity for ice.

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[398] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Mr. and Mrs. Bidwell, San Francisco, June 19th, 1879.

[399] Dennis R. Dean, "Muir and Geology" in *John Muir: Life and Work,* 174.

[400] Paul Sheats, "John Muir's Glacial Gospel" in *John Muir: Life and Legacy.* Sheats discusses how Muir, through an inherited predisposition from his Protestant roots, evangelized his glacial 'truths' as a unique merging of science and theology.

[401] John Muir, "Travels in Alaska" in *EWDB*, 723.

[402] W.H. Bell, "The Stickeen River and Its Glaciers", *Scribner's Monthly,* April 1879. In the collection of the Holt Atherton Archives, University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA.

> There was something in this mass of ice that fascinated one in its immensity. Members of the party a few hundred yards away looked like insects, and nothing was great but the ice, and that was clear, beautiful, majestic and awful. No one seemed inclined to talk, and the stillness was only broken by murmurs of admiration and wonder.[403]

Shortly after the Sunday School Convention, at which Muir also heard fellow presenter, Dr. Sheldon Jackson deliver a lecture on Alaska, Muir made up his mind to venture north. Muir returned to Martinez to visit the Strentzel family and make final preparations for the excursion. He also managed to secure a contract with the San Francisco *Daily Evening Bulletin* for a series of articles describing the north country, thus assuring some sort of financial support during the extended northern foray.

Perhaps in response to the impending parting and as an emotional counterweight to the length of time he hoped to spend exploring the north, Muir finally took the long avoided step towards home and hearth, and on the eve of his departure proposed marriage to Louie Strentzel. During the rather shy and oftentimes sporadic courtship, Muir had found in Louie the gravity and loving, quiet support that had also typified his relationship with his mother, Anne Gilrye Muir. The decision to wed at the age of 41 was an answer to a growing need for family love, a need that had never been totally assuaged by the spiritual, intellectual and physical love of the wilderness. Muir had resisted earlier suggestions by friends to marry and start a family, and any attempts a matchmaking were, like a savvy mule by a precipice, neatly side-stepped. There was, however, always a latent yearning for family love, and especially for children.[404]

From this point on, Muir would seek to address a dichotomy of personal needs, endeavoring to strike a balance between the need for family love and the love of wilderness. The decision could also have been, at least in part, an answer to a practical Scottish need for financial solvency. As sole heiress of a large estate, Louie Strentzel was a woman of means and social position. Further, the prospect of working in the Strenzel family fruit farm business was most likely not, at least initially, a negative prospect for Muir. He enjoyed Dr. Strentzel's company and scientific discussions, and throughout the months of his deepening courtship with Louie, Muir had, for the most part, addressed all three of the Strentzels with fondness and respect in his correspondence. Having made this momentous decision, Muir was immediately off on a prolonged exploratory excursion, free for the last time of family responsibilities and relishing every minute of it. With a forbearance that would characterize much of her married life, Louie relinquished her fiancé to his last bachelor wilderness foray, biding her time and hopeful for a reunion in the fall and thereafter, wedding plans.

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[403] Ibid. 809.

[404] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Sarah Muir Galloway, January 12th, 1877.

Writing to friends on June 19th, Muir gave a sketchy itinerary of his northern excursion. "Tomorrow I sail…to the ice of the upper Coast, first to Victoria & about the Sound thence inland here & there to learn what I may. Will probably visit Alaska ere I return in the fall"[405] After boarding the steamer *Dakota* on June 20th, 1879, Muir made his first stop four days later in Esquimault Harbor, near Victoria, British Columbia.

Muir's first impressions of Victoria were infused with his observations of icy origins. "In the town gardens and orchards, peaches and apples fell upon glacier-polished rocks, and the streets were graded in moraine gravel…" he wrote, adding that the signs of ancient glaciers were as "…unweathered and telling as those of the High Sierra of California."[406] It is interesting that Muir's powers of observation stayed true to his High Sierra glacial insights, viewing the glacial evidence in British Columbia more as support for his vision of ancient Sierran glaciers and not yet as an event in landscape formation singular to that place. This fixation with finding evidence in the north to support his California glacial theories remained an important element during Muir's 1879 excursion, a focus that underscored his great need to verify and scientifically validate the intuitive glacial theory he advanced through his Sierran studies.

From his arrival in Esquimault Harbour on June 24th to his departure on July 10th for Wrangel, Alaska, Muir followed a wandering course throughout Puget Sound and the south coast of British Columbia. Leaving Victoria for Port Townsend on June 24th, Muir sailed to Seattle on the 25th, and then on to Olympia via Tacoma and Steilicoom. His observations during this time indicated his primary interest in glacial evidence. Even from the decks of the steamer Muir was able to use his glacial eye, "… the glacial hand-writing is so clear & telling & on so grand a scale that I have been nervous & excited beyond all control" he wrote to the Strentzel family.[407] “The whole region hereabouts was overswept by an ice sheet. This is certain.”[408]

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[405] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Mr. and Mrs. Bidwell, San Francisco, June 19th, 1879.

[406] John Muir, "Travels in Alaska", in *EWDB,* 725.

Interspersed with glowing accounts of glacial evidence, Muir was also surprised by the profusion of flowering plants and trees, noting the lavish growth of roses and spirea, 8 foot-tall ferns and everywhere ‘…the most luxuriant and densest growth of conifers I ever saw.”[409] More telling was a comment made at the end of the June 25th letter to the Strentzels, an echo of the beginning and the ending of his first Canadian foray thirteen years past. “The world is all before me” he penned, once again recognizing a moment of portent in his life, a turning point rife with choice, risk and promise.[410]

Sailing from Seattle on June 26th, Muir arrived once more in Victoria, and after a full day of enjoying the charm of flower gardens and glacial stories writ large in the landscape, he set sail on the evening of the 29th on the *Wilson B. Hunt* for Naniamo. On the 30th, he crossed the Straight of Georgia from Naniamo to the mouth of the Fraser River, and then upriver to the town of New Westminster. July 1st was Dominion Day, and the small village was alive with celebration for a country only eleven years old.

July 2nd found Muir heading upriver to the head of navigation at Yale. Here he spent a day exploring the surrounding mountains, and recorded his first observations of native peoples going about their daily lives. Muir’s interest in the lives of native people during the 1879 excursion into British Columbia and Alaska underscores an interesting and contentious dichotomy in his attitude towards Indians. From a contemporary perspective, Muir has been criticized as a Victorian era bigot who was not particularly understanding or accepting of aboriginal or Negro peoples.[411] While this criticism is voiced after a century of social and political evolution in human rights, it remains that within his writings, both published and unpublished, that Muir expressed a Victorian paternalism, and at times a negative attitude towards Indians and black people.[412]

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[407] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to the Strentzel family, On board the Zephyr between Steilicoom & Olympia, June 25th, 1879.

[408] Ibid.

[409] Ibid.

[410] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to the Strentzel Family, Between Steilicoom & Olympia, June 25th, 1879.

[411] Ross Wakefield, “Muir’s Early Indian Views” Another Look at *My First Summer in the Sierra,* John Muir Newsletter, V. 5, no. 1, winter 1994-95, John Muir Centre for Regional Studies, University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA.

What is also noteworthy, however, is that what we now see as condescending and patriarchal in Muir's attitudes towards native people was also accompanied by a sincere interest in native culture, families, children and practical technology. The following observation, written later during this first excursion into Alaska and northern British Columbia, is as clear an indication of Muir's attitudes and feelings regarding native people as can be found anywhere in his writings.

> The most striking characteristic of these people is their easy dignity under the most novel circumstances, and their willingness to abandon their usages [sic]of every kind for those of the whites. Even the little children behave well, come to the strange whites when called, restrain laughter at the novel hymn-singing, etc., and when an old woman of the assembly fell asleep and began to snore, both old and young were shaken with suppressed mirth as if appreciating the manners and ridiculousness [sic] of the position as fully as whites would. It is curious how fully at home one feels in the company of these so-called savages. They are not savages in the ordinary sense of the term. I have never seen Europeans or Americans of the poorer classes who would compare favorably with them in good breeding, intelligence, and skill in accomplishing whatever they try to do with tools in building, carving, planning etc., or in their conceptions of the spiritual kind, moral sense, government, political, judicial or domestic. I have never seen a child ill-used even to the extent of an angry word. Scolding, so common a curse of the degraded of the Christian countries, is not known here at all. But on the contrary the young are fondled and indulged without being spoiled. Crying is rarely heard.[413]

Muir's encounter with Indians fishing on the Fraser River was indicative of his interest in with their fishing technology, and respect for their skill in the creation and paddling of dugout canoes. Above Yale, Muir recorded his observations of the native people fishing in the 'foaming surges' of the Fraser River as it was compressed through narrow gorges.

> Here we can [see] many Indians catching salmon with scoop net held vertically from platform built over sheer rock in eddy…The Indians…lay in their winter stores. Drying large quantities and storing them in caches up in the branches of the trees near the riverbank. [The] store boxes are built of boards about 6 ft long 4 deep 4 wide, held in place by poles and ropes. They are often 20 or 30 feet above the ground where the air circulates freely and where the stores are safe from dogs wolves etc.[414]

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[412] While working to remain true to the evidence within Muir's extent papers and published works, the interpretation as noted should not be construed as being the opinion of the author.

[413] *John Muir Papers,* Series II, Reel 26. AMS Journal, 1st Alaska Trip with S. Hall Young, Oct-Dec 1879.

[414] *John Muir Papers,* AMS Journal, Expedition to Alaska, Jun-Sept 1879, Series II, Reel 25, 01559.

Muir must have made the most of his time at Yale, for he also quite taken with the Indian's process of creating dugout canoes. "The Indians are expert canoe men" he wrote in his journal, "…every Indian is capable of reckless deliberation in carrying out his conception working with heaven-like industry wholly oblivious to the lapse of time…"[415] He then followed with a thorough description of the steps the Indians took in creating their canoes, with attention to the tools and methods used. Observing the proficiency with which the natives handled their light and versatile craft, he noted "…even small children paddle skil[l]fully, both boys and girls use a paddle as (instinctively) naturally as birds their wings."[416]

Leaving Yale, Muir's return trip to Victoria was marked only by a brief stop on July 1st at New Westminster where "Dominion Day was being celebrated…" and "…the little village was crowded with people from Victoria and Naniamo."[417] From Victoria, Muir embarked on another wandering route for Seattle, Tacoma, via rail to Kalama, then downstream on the Colombia to Portland. At Portland, Muir parted company with his traveling companion, Thomas Magee of San Francisco. "Magee took the one for his wife – home - & - business I the other for -------- & trees and ice etc." he wrote to the Strentzel family on July 9th, implying that wife, home and business were not his primary focus, at least not yet, and the trees and ice were calling. How Louie, waiting patiently at home, took these small asides, one can only imagine.

Leaving Portland at 3 in the morning on the steamer *California* for a short stop in Victoria before finally sailing for Wrangell, Alaska, Muir wrote a long letter to the Strentzel family, thanking them for their kindness in sending letters to him in Seattle. For the most part the letter was a long rambling travel itinerary, and notably bereft of personal messages for his bride-to-be. Perhaps realizing this, Muir penned a separate note to Louie on July 10th, but even this attempt indicated some reticence to showing romantic feelings. "Be patient…Heaven bless you" he wrote in closing, after a description of Victoria Harbour and an admission of seasickness.[418] For the remainder of what he viewed as his last unencumbered wilderness excursion, Muir would remain caught between his need for freedom and wilderness, and the realization that betrothal entailed responsibility for oneself as the locus of love and care from others. "Your loving kindness and confidence are very comforting to a lonely wanderer..." he wrote to the Strenzel family from the deck of the California, "...Notwithstanding your sacrificing care for me makes me miss it when I think about it, accustomed as I have been to fight on and walk on relying only on God & myself."[419] Muir may well have relied only on God and himself in the past, but on this last excursion as a bachelor it appears he occasionally found it difficult to include the Strentzel family, and Louie in particular, into the weave of his life.

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[415] *John Muir Papers,* AMS Journal, Series II, Expedition to Alaska, 1879 June 6; Jul 20-30; Sept 16, 24.

[416] Ibid. 26.

[417] *John Muir Papers,* AMS Journal 194, Series II, 00026.

[418] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to Louie Strentzel, Victoria, B.C., July 10th, 1879.

On board the *California*, Muir became reacquainted with fellow passenger, Dr. Sheldon Jackson, the missionary who had lectured on Alaska at the Sunday School Convention in Yosemite. Accompanying Jackson to Alaska were two Presbyterian Ministers, Dr. Henry Kendall and Dr. Aaron Lindsley, and over the course of the voyage, a decidedly chilly atmosphere developed between Muir and the three 'Doctors of Divinity'.[420] As Wolfe intimates, Muir remained resistant to religious creeds due to early experiences with his father's dogmatic sectarianism, and at some point Muir and the 'Divines', as he called them, probably had a difference of opinion.[421]

Upon arriving on the morning of July 10th for the fourth stopover in Victoria at the end of his wandering exploration of Puget Sound and the south-west coast of British Columbia, Muir was again struck by the obvious glacial origin of the landscape underlying the town. Perhaps as a result of freshened antipathy to the religious cant of the 'Divines', his glacial observations are coupled with a pithy indictment of 'lord man', blind to the 'heaven' at his feet.

> Here for the fourth time this year I saw the gl[acial] rocks and traces wh[ich] seemed yet more fresh and telling in all that relates to the action of the ice-sheet; it's course, the way it deposits the so-called gl[acial] drift, excavates harbors and fiords, and brings landscape features in general into relief. Yet, strange to say, man, with his reason, builds his houses, grades streets, tills the gl[acial] soil on the ground prepared by this mighty agent, where the phenomena are so strange and so striking as to attract and arrest the attention of animals, without once attracting his. So truly blind is lord man; so pathetically employed in his little jobs of town-building, church-building, bread-getting, the study of the spirits and heaven etc. that he can see nothing of the heaven he is in. Place

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[419] Ibid.

[420] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness,* 204.

[421] Ibid. 205.

> people who sing heaven and explore it so zealously here and they would still be seeking it without guessing for a moment their present whereabouts.[422]

It remained a constant source of frustration for Muir that people were so engrossed in what he felt were narrowly perceived lives that they missed the very message of God under their feet, in the glaciated landforms, winds and rain, flowers and trees. If, at this point, he vented somewhat, then something sparked the diatribe, (the Divines?) for this passage was certainly different in tone than the remaining journal entries during his voyage north to Alaska.

Sailing Days from Victoria to Fort Wrangell

After a brief stay in Victoria, Muir set sail on the *California* for the north coast of British Columbia and Alaska. Muir's journal entries during the passage along the coast of British Columbia and into the Alaskan Archipelago contain a multitude of carefully executed pencil drawings. It is apparent from the drawings that during the voyage north Muir's memory of the land and seascapes relied on capturing the essence and reality of his visual experiences, for he chronicled them with an almost photographic realism.

In all of Muir's 1879 field journals, sketches in sharp pencil with a fine eye for detail often predate his written descriptions and notes. In many instances, the sketches were the only medium he used to record both scientific observations and an aesthetic appreciation for the subject. It is apparent that he sought to record and remember the nuances of his experiences not only through pencilled representations, but also through the *process* of sketching - a process that took time and allowed the qualitative details of each scene to sink deep into his consciousness. For Muir, each drawing provided a rich memory of that scene, not only of the subject matter, but more ambient qualities such as light, temperature, scent, movement and color. It was this quality of remembered details that infused his later writing with such marked effect.

Upon leaving Victoria, the *California* steamed north through Georgia Straight to Departure Bay and the small town of Naniamo. As the *California* loaded coal for the voyage north, Muir became very interested in the history of coal mining in the area, and the extent of the coal seams and production rates of the mines. As Correspondent for the *San Franscisco Daily Evening Bulletin*, Muir's notes on coal production were not simply interesting for him, but may well have been written as a basis for a part of a future newspaper article. His journal notes furnished the bones of the *Bulletin* articles he wrote during the 1879 excursion, and as such, cover the range of commercial facts and observable glacial evidence to the more esoteric experiences of a sublime northern wilderness. The town of Naniamo may have been primarily noted in Muir's journal because of the local coal-mine, but the beauty of Departure Bay was also captured by a carefully rendered sketch of the bay's scattered islets and rocky shores. Interestingly, with his recurrent habit of superimposing Yosemitic traits onto new landscapes, Muir observed five or six large ships loading in Departure Bay and that "…seemed strangely out of place in so quiet an inland wilderness, lying alongside gl[acial] rock bosses as if in some gl[acial] lake on the high Sierra."[423] Markedly, the Sierra comparisons would continue throughout this first northern glacial expedition, as Muir sought collaborative evidence for many of his cherished Sierran-born glacial theories.

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[422] *John Muir Papers,* Series II, Reel 25, 01617, File 00028, Notebook 20, (Badè Transcription). See also Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 247. Note that Wolfe follows Muir's later amendment to place the observation 'Along the Coast', and deletes the reference to the fourth visit to Victoria.

Departing from Naniamo, "…our trip to Alaska fairly began" Muir wrote, and the ensuing days melded together in a rapture of wild coastal beauty.[424] In a letter to the Strentzel family Muir was in transport, "But dear me, how comprehensively impossible it is for anything like a fair presentation of the subject to be made here. I have been gazing nearly all these nightless days as the wondrous landscapes passed in review, & have scarce written a note."[425]

Amid the eloquent descriptions of the wending way through channel after channel, Muir's pencil sketches show the varied beauty that caught his eye. Myriad islets set in a calm sea; Yosemitic channels delving deep into coastal mountains; layer upon layer of ocean-side rocky outcrops melding into forested hills and steep coastal mountains; and lovely renderings of the beauty of the Queen Charlotte Islands grace page after page of his journal. Muir sketched to capture the variety and beauty of the voyage north, but as he noted, "…the whole is so fine, so tender, so ethereal, that all penwork seems hopelessly unavailing…What can the heart of man conceive more divine?"[426]

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[423] *John Muir Papers,* Series II, Alaska Trip, AMSS Journal 63, file 00028, Badè Journal number 20, transcription of original.

[424] Ibid.

[425] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to the Strentzel family, Sitka, Alaska, July 15, 1879.

[426] John Muir, "Travels in Alaska", in *EWDB,* 728.

For Muir, divinity was implicit in the obvious glacial origins of the shining watercourses - the inlets channels and rocky shores all bore distinct evidence of ancient ice work. Muir's focus on glacial evidence was paramount, "…from channel to channel…" he noted, "…these marvellous pathways [are] eroded by the glaciers & not appreciably changed by post glacial agents."[427] He commented on the variety and beauty of the coastal landscape, attributing the diversity somewhat to the underlying structure of rocks and pre-glacial features, but overall, saw and understood the profound effects of the ancient ice sheet that had covered the entire region. "These causes" he wrote, "produced endless variety, but in one particular these landscapes all agree. They all have a rounded, over-rubbed, sand-papered appearance; an exquisite finish caused by the one wide, all embracing hand of ice."[428]

For Muir, the 'all embracing hand of ice' was tantamount to the all-embracing hand of God. Muir did not actively separate his theories and observations of glaciation from the beauty of the wild coastal landscape, but accepted and internalized both as a unifying testament to a divine creative process. Once again, it is possible to see the gestalt expansion and inclusiveness of Muir's Sierran years continue into this north coast experience - the melding of wilderness mysticism and careful scientific work; of beauty and science; and the recognition of divinity suffused in all.

> …however bewildering any attempt to describe the whole sheet of this ravishingly lovely landscape, the eye easily takes in and swells with ever fresh delight on the smaller of the individual islands. Though in their relations to each other the members of a group are evidently derived from the same source, one rock-mass hewn from one stone, yet they never seem broken or abridged as to their individual lines of contour…viewed one by one they seem detached beauties, like extracts from a fine poem; while from the way that the lines sweep over from side to side and the way that the trees are put on, each seems in itself a finished stanza.[429]

Ft. Wrangell and Sitka, Alaska

The *California* steamed into Ft. Wrangell with a chorus of whistle and cannon at 6:00 am, July 14th, 1879. At the wharf, the three travelling ministers, Jackson, Kendall and Lindsley, were greeted by resident missionary, S. Hall Young. Noticing a passenger standing off by himself, "…his peering blue eyes already eagerly scanning the islands and mountains…" Hall Young was intrigued and subsequently introduced to "Professor Muir, the Naturalist."[430] The meeting would be the beginning of a friendship that Hall Young believed "…one of the very best things I have known in a life full of blessings."[431] While Muir's thoughts on this first meeting were not recorded, a life-long friendship ensued to the great benefit of both men.[432]

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[427] Ibid.

[428] *John Muir Papers,* Journal 63, Vancouver Island: Alaskan Coast, 1879.

[429] *John Muir Papers,* Series II, Journal 63, Vancouver Island, Alaska Coast, July 10, 1879 – [Aug]. Transcription of original.

Leaving the missionaries, Muir briefly explored the village, his first impression not at all favorable. Writing to the Strentzel family, Muir brought his substantial gift for description into full play. The village was, he wrote with wry wit, an assortment of "…rikety, falling scatterments of houses dead and decomposing set & sunken in a blacky oozy bog, the crooked trains of wooden huts wriggling along either side of streets obstructed by wolfish curs, hideous Indians, logs, stumps & erratic bowlders…"[433] But, he added with telling comparison, "…how beautiful are the mountains beyond laden with glaciers."[434] Always, his gaze would move to the mountains and glaciers, but access to them remained unattainable.

The *California*, bound for Sitka, Alaska, departed that same afternoon with Muir on board. Stopping en route in the small outpost village of Chechan, Muir again noted evidence of glacial work on the mountains. Building from the his reference work in the High Sierra, he made note of the sheered off north faces and rounded south shoulders of the mountains, and one in particular that bore a close likeness to his beloved Half Dome in Yosemite Valley.[435] The glaciers, peeking through the mountains and deep forests were "…mere far away glimpses but most telling to me."[436]

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[430] S. Hall Young, "Alaskan Days with John Muir", *in John Muir: His Life and Letters and other Writings*, 625.

[431] Ibid, 625.

[432] In addition to the explorations in 1879, S. Hall Young accompanied Muir during his northern glacial explorations in 1880, visited him in Martinez, and by chance met up with Muir in 1897 on board an Alaskan-bound steamer. Correspondence between Young and Muir continued intermittently for the duration of Muir's life.

[433] *John Muir Papers,* Letter from John Muir to the Strentzel Family, Sitka, Alaska, July 15th, 1879.

[434] Ibid.

[435] *John Muir Papers,* Series II, Journal 63, Badè Journal Number 20, Transcription of original, 15.

[436] Ibid.

Muir arrived in Sitka on the morning of July 15th. Without spending any appreciable amount of time in what he deemed a 'queer old townlet', Muir headed back into the woods, and found a mile or two back from the village a lovely bog growing a profusion of plants that instantly brought to mind his early days in Canada West. "I seemed to be in one of the bogs of Canada about Georgian Bay" he wrote, "... so many old friends did I meet..." With a sure sign of delight, he broke into his old Scots diction, "...vaccinium, cranberry, partridge berry, lycopodium, mosses, ferns and a' that and a' that ... as muckle of true bog beauties dear to the heart of every dweller of the caul (sic) north."[437] Thirteen years later after leaving Canada West, the plants and beauty of Georgian Bay still had the power to bring old memories to the forefront in Muir's enjoyment of the moment.

Boarding the *California* once more for a short side trip to a salmon cannery six miles from Sitka, Muir was becoming more anxious regarding his inability to access the mountains and glaciers. The views of 'noble glaciers' flowing from sharp-peaked mountain ranges, and wide steep-walled canyons drawing the ice down to the level of the sea only served to make Muir's need to explore more acute. But, he noted, the glaciers and mountains, "...while calling me, seemed beyond reach."[438] "There are no settlements..." he observed, "...no base of supplies or communication in the wilderness, while I have been everywhere assured that the life of an adventurer away from the towns of Sitka and Wrangell would surely be short."[439] Musing on his options, he elected to remain in the area for a month or two and await an opportunity to see the interior and to access the ranges and their tantalizing rivers of ice, and barring this, Muir felt he "may at least go up the Stickeen."[440]

Returning to Ft. Wrangell on either July 16th or 17th, Muir found a decent option for shelter in the mission's carpenter shop, and was quite at home in the fragrant shavings and wood working tools.[441] After one night in the shop, a local merchant, Mr. Vanderbilt, offered the hospitality of his own home to the naturalist. Here Muir found a 'home in Alaska', complete with a 'dainty dot of a lass', little Annie Vanderbilt, who captured Muir's heart and refreshed his innate love of children.

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[437] Ibid. 15-16.

[438] Ibid. 19-20.

[439] Ibid. 19

[440] Ibid.19-20.

[441] *John Muir Papers,* Nevada and Alaska Essays, Notebook 207, 51. The date of Muir's return to Wrangell is noted as the 16th in his letter to the Strentzel family dated July 15th, 1979, and is also noted in his notebook chronicling daily weather reports that he arrived July 17th.

> …a sweet clean home with a bright 2 yr old as the very kernel heart & centre of it…a bright & bonnie bit lassie to whom I owe much, half angel half angle in wh[ich] terrestrial & celestial blessedly blend…over the carpet top heavy toddling rocking & bobling like a boat in a tide rip.[442]

Muir's decision to wed, with it accompanying expectations of family life, may well have brought his delight in the Vanderbilt toddler into a more immediate personal context. Here, however, he could enjoy the Vanderbilt household and the presence of the toddler without the accompanying responsibility. Family and children could be enjoyed vicariously, but for Muir in Alaska that July, the glaciers still called, the summer was half gone, and he still hadn't stepped foot on ice.

A Great Glacier Day – Muir's first northern glacier experience

On July 21st, Muir joined the missionary group at Wrangell for a chartered excursion on the steamer, Cassiar, bound for the Chilcat tribal village at the head of Chatham Straight. While the missionary group, Dr. Jackson and company with wives, along with the young minister, S. Hall Young, were intent on introducing the Christian message to the Chilcat tribe, Muir seized the opportunity in order to gain closer study of the glaciers and forests. By that evening, however, the voyage was scuttled due to a lack of fresh water for the *Cassiar's* boilers, and the mounting costs incurred due to the steamer's slow progress.

Muir was frustrated. "I would fain have gone on at any cost but the divines, as they are called, esteemed the cost of reaching and saving the souls of the Chilcats as too great" he noted with asperity.[443] The day of sailing had brought new vistas of massive glacial rivers winding down through an "…imposing array of pinnacles and towers and black outstanding battlements" but that evening, Muir once again had to content himself with exploration of coastal plant life.

The morning of July 22nd was full of deliberations as to how to salvage the aborted Chilcat trip. No doubt due in part to Muir's powers of persuasion, it was decided that side excursions to some of the glaciers along the route back to Wrangell would compensate somewhat for the loss of the Chilcat excursion.

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[442] *John Muir Papers,* Nevada and Alaska Essays, Notebook 207, 51.

[443] *John Muir Papers,* Series II, Journal 63, Badè Journal Number 20, Transcription of original.

Steaming into a steep walled fiord, the Captain anchored the Cassiar near the terminal moraine of a large glacier, and arranged for Muir, S. Hall Young and Dr. Jackson to reach shore in a canoe paddled by four Indians. It is important to note that within the context of Muir's 1879 trip to Alaska and north-western British Columbia, this was his first experience in direct contact with a northern glacier.

Although Muir was not overly ebullient in his field journal regarding his first glacier experience, his later writings add significant emotional and descriptive weight to this glacial foray.[444] The field journal also contains a series of beautifully executed drawings of three glaciers Muir observed during the *Cassiar* excursion, including two drawings of the "Great gl[acier] 60 miles N.W. Wrangell."[445] Once again, the sketches precede the written entries, and most probably served as a method of recalling the richness of this first glacial experience when, near the end of his life, Muir wrote "Travels in Alaska."

This first short glacial excursion only served to whet Muir's appetite, as to his great annoyance he and Hall Young were called back from their explorations by the powers-that-be waiting on the *Cassiar.* "We would gladly had remained on this rugged living savage old mill of God & watched its work…" he later wrote, "… but we had no bread for our weary legs & that confounded Cassiar with her sore cylinder heads was screaming for our return."[446] One afternoon on this great coastal glacier was not enough for Muir.

The remainder of the aborted Chilcat excursion was spent exploring an abandoned village of the Stikine Indians south of Wrangell. Muir was fascinated by the native culture, and noted much about the site in his journal, including several drawings of totems and symbols engraved in ledges of slate a mile or so from the village. It appears from the journal entries that S. Hall Young, and perhaps the other missionaries told Muir what they knew of the culture, customs and beliefs of the coastal tribes. The stories Muir noted of witchcraft, superstition, native justice and economics certainly indicate the prime issues facing the missions.

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[444] *John Muir Papers,* Series II, Journal 63, Badè Journal Number 20, File 00028, 28-9. Muir's made purely factual entries into his field journal in describing his first brief exploration of a northern glacier. In his posthumously published book "Travels in Alaska", Muir described in some detail how he and Hall Young managed to make their way up onto the glacier and explore back more than a mile. "Every feature…" Muir wrote, "…glowed with intention, reflecting the plans of God." See "Travels in Alaska" in *EWDB*, 752.

[445] *John Muir Papers,* Series II, Journal 63, Alaska Trip, File 00028.

[446] *John Muir Papers,* Series III B, Reel 38, 06388, "Excursion on One of the Great Glaciers of Alaska", September 7, 1879.

Muir also added his own ruminations on the native peoples of the region to the stories he noted in the journal. These particular journal entries are not reflected in Muir's depiction of this particular day in "Travels in Alaska." Sanitized, buffed and glowing, the "Travels in Alaska" description of this particular day does not show the dichotomy of Muir's attitudes towards the native people, on one hand praising them, on another passing negative judgement on appearance. "Many of them with rather short legs, square built, broad backed and stumpy looking in some degree..." Muir wrote of the coastal natives, "... not a single specimen that would compare at all favorably with the best of the Sioux or indeed of almost any of the tribes E[east] of the Rocky Mountains. They also differ from other Indians in their willingness to work. Industrious when free from the contamination of bad whites or those who are too good."[447] Paternalistic and judgmental, the attitude Muir expressed in his journal towards native people, while politically incorrect today, was likely more acceptable within the social and political spectrum of his time. It was also a part of the study of natural history to include the categorization of native peoples, much like any other interesting flora and fauna. We may flinch at what we see as callous and judgmental of aboriginal culture rich and embedded for thousands of years in the coastal environment, but it is also important to note that this was written during the first of Muir's seven excursions to Alaska. Although he never lost his paternalistic attitudes, Muir's subsequent voyages and explorations of the Alaskan coast were successful in large part because of the abilities and support of native people, and he grew to respect and admire the cultural resourcefulness of the coastal tribes.[448]

The Cassiar excursion set the stage for Muir's entry into north-western British Columbia. The rather abbreviated excursion on the great coastal glacier had been a fascinating introduction, but stories of the Stikine River glaciers were on Muir's mind. Returning to Wrangell the evening of July 24th, Muir spent the next few days waiting for the *Cassiar* to sail for Glenora, at the head of navigation on the Stikine River.

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[447] *John Muir Papers,* Series II, Journal 63, Notebook 20, file 00028, 31.

[448] John Muir, "Travels in Alaska" in *EWDB*, 811-14. See also Julie Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters and Social Imagination, 154-78.* Cruikshank relates the story of Muir's first Alaskan coast canoe trip in the company of S. Hall Young and Tlinget guides during the fall of 1879. During this voyage, Muir was introduced to the culture, skills and knowledge of the coastal tribes. He also runs into trouble with Toyatte, the elder Tlinget guide, for being reckless with the lives of the crew. Muir soon learned to listen and respect the elder, and the crew survived the journey.

The Stikine River

The Tlingit people of the northwest coast call it Stikine, the "Great River."[449] Born in the raw beauty of the Spatsizi Plateau in north-central British Columbia, the Stikine first runs northeast, then curves west, and finally south to eventually join the Pacific a few kilometres north of Wrangell, Alaska. Osborn caribou, wolves, grizzly bears and resident populations of mountain goats still live in the wilds of the Stikine watershed. Much of this vast area, spanning 50,000 square kilometres, retains the wilderness character that Muir experienced in the summer of 1879.

From its source, the Stikine flows through glacial-carved valleys and cold, clear lakes, gaining volume with the merging of the Chuckachida, Ross, Spatsizi, Pittman and Klappan Rivers. At approximately 230 kilometres from its source, the river abruptly changes, falling between steep cliffs of tiered basalt up to 300 metres high. Compressed through the steep walled gorges, the river turns violent and impassable, a magnificent excess of white water that forms the river's untameable heart – the Grand Canyon of the Stikine.

Volcanic activity played a major role in the formation of the unique landscape of the Grand Canyon of the Stikine. Directly south-east of the canyon at a distance of 50 kilometres, Mt. Edziza rises to a height of 2787 feet – a slumbering composite volcano that directly influenced the geology of a 600 square-mile surrounding area.[450] Northwest of the river, Level Mountain contributed to the formation of the basalt layers so apparent in the steep walls of the Stikine Canyon, and helped form the high lava plateaux that flourished with wild game and provided rich hunting grounds for local native tribes.[451]

The last ice age retreated 10,000 years ago, leaving the entire region with marked glacial landforms. Drumlin-like features in the Stikine plateau mark the northward retreat of ice.[452] The inland plateau region of the Stikine watershed is characterized by boreal forest, with white and black spruce, lodgepole pine, trembling aspen, cottonwood, alders and birch the predominant species. The valley country within the upper reaches of the Stikine watershed merges from the boreal into spruce-willow-birch and up into the alpine tundra biogeoclimatic zone.[453] Subject to long cold winters and short cool summers, the region is inhospitable to agriculture, but happily nurtures moose, wolves and mosquitoes.

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[449] Gary Fiegehen, *Stikine – The Great River*, Preface by Peter Rowlands, (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 1991), 12.

[450] J.G. Souther, "Recent Vulcanism and its influence on early native cultures of north-western British Columbia" in *Early Man and Environments in Northwest America*, J.W. and R. A. Smith, eds., (Calgary: University of Calgary Archaeological Association, 1970), 59.

[451] Ibid. 53.

[452] Sylvia Albright, *Tahltan Ethnoarchaeology,* (Burnaby: Dept. of Archaeology, Simon Fraser University, 1984), 27.

Below the Grand Canyon, the river gradually widens and emerges at the small village of Telegraph Creek. The river now runs deep and calm, generally retaining this character for the remaining 200 kilometre reach to the Pacific Ocean. Telegraph Creek marks the beginning of this unique stretch of the Stikine, as it swings southwest through a valley of wide level terraces marking ancient meanders, and then south through the rugged coastal ranges. Warm westerly winds coming up the Stikine River valley from the coast results also mark the Telegraph Creek environs as a biogeoclimatic transition zone. Greater precipitation and warmer mean average temperatures replace the boreal with the sub-boreal zone.[454] Tree species in the sub boreal spruce forest remain the same, but are generally larger due to more favorable growing climate. Downstream from Telegraph Creek, the sub-boreal spruce zone quickly blends into temperate rainforests of the coastal ranges, characterized by mountain hemlock and coastal western hemlock forests.[455]

Through the mountains, the river is defined by glaciers – extensions of the Stikine Icecap from the west, and residual icefields from the east. All of these glaciers are remnants of the great Cordilleran icesheet that covered the entire region approximately 20,000 years ago. Countless tributaries plunge from high icefields and deep glaciated valleys, carving steep-sided gorges that radiate from the main river valley. The Stikine alternately braids over wide gravel bars and converges into a massive main channel, its calm mood only occasionally broken by short canyons compressing the river volume into fast water and standing waves.

Along the lower third of the Stikine, the Flood Glacier (also called the Dirt Glacier), the Mud Glacier and finally the Great Glacier are all within the Canadian reaches of the great river. Although these particular glaciers are by no means the only glacial tributaries of the Stikine, they were central to Muir's glacial exploration in 1979.[456] The Flood Glacier, downstream from Telegraph Creek and flowing east from the great Stikine Icefield, is within accessible walking distance from the Stikine River. Further downstream, the Mud Glacier also flows from the Stikine Icefield, and while visible from the river, is not so readily accessible as the Flood Glacier. The Great Glacier, the largest and closest to the river of all the Stikine Icefield extensions, is a spectacular winding iceriver that regularly spawns icebergs into the blue green lake at its terminal extent, and is separated from the Stikine by a long forested terminal moraine. The Great Glacier is approximately 20 kilometres from the British Columbia/Alaska border and is the last Canadian glacier of significant size readily accessible from the Stikine River.

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[453] MacKinnon, Andy, Jim Pojar, Ray Coupe, *Plants of Northern British Columbia*, (Edmonton: Lone Pine Publishing, 1992), 12-15.

[454] Sylvia Albright, *Tahltan Ethnoarchaeology*, 26.

[455] MacKinnon et al, *Plants of Northern British Columbia*, 12-3.

Downriver from the Great Glacier of the Stikine, the Iskut River, the largest tributary of the Stikine, enters from the east. Below this confluence the Stikine swings west once again, and crosses the Alaska/British Columbia border approximately 35 kilometres above the Stikine estuary – a maze of islands, sandbars and braided streams that marks the river's arrival in the Pacific. The estuary is rich with life – teeming with migratory birds, and critical to the annual runs of salmon and the sleek Steelhead, an ocean-going trout of mythical beauty, strength and cunning. South of the estuary over a short span of water Wrangell Island lies in quiet, forested repose, and present day Wrangell, as it was in Muir's day, continues to be the point of departure for upstream river traffic, or the terminus of downstream travel.

Muir's First Trip up the Stikine River

On July 28th, 1879, Muir joined the group of missionaries he had accompanied on the aborted Chilcat excursion, including S. Hall Young, and set sail on the *Cassiar* at 3:10 p.m., destined for the villages of Glenora and Telegraph Creek on the Stikine River.[457] While this first trip introduced Muir to the Canadian Northwest, he spent most of the six days of this excursion impatiently confined to the decks of the steamer. Despite this, Muir's first foray up the Stikine was not disappointing, for the gradually unfolding views of one glacier after another extending from the massive Stikine Icefield captured his imagination and contributed to his understanding of glacial landscape formation.

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[456] *John Muir Papers,* Journal 73, File 06780, 76. In the end notes of his second trip up the Stikine River field journal, Muir makes a running tally of the number of glaciers and their general placement from the Stikine River, a total of 161 glaciers.

[457] Glenora and Telegraph Creek, only a few kilometers apart on the Stikine River, functioned as the head of navigation for steamboat travel during the 1800's and early 1900's.

The *Cassiar* anchored the night of July 28th a mile upstream from the mouth of the Stikine River. Muir's itinerary, noted on two end pages in his field journal, provides a precise chronology of this first Stikine excursion.[458] Setting out at 5:30 a.m. on the morning of the 29th, the *Cassiar* made short stops at Slopeville, (near the Canada/U.S. border), and Buck's, a trading post operated by former Hudson Bay Company trader and 1861 gold rush miner, Buck Choquette. Leaving Buck's at 11:50 a.m., the steamer slowly made its way upstream past an abandoned Hudson Bay Post and tied up for the night just below what Muir called 'Beaver Wreck.'[459] July 30th dawned clear, and the *Cassiar* got an early start at 3:15 am, steaming hard through Little Canyon at 7:18 am and eventually achieved the broader river reaches on the east side of the coastal ranges. The *Cassiar* arrived at Glenora at 6:25 the evening of the July 30th, 1879.[460]

In studying Muir's field journal of this first trip up the Stikine, it becomes apparent that Muir's penchant for detailed pencil sketches once again led the way as field observations. Soon after sailing on the morning of the 29th, Muir's first of several Stikine River pencil sketches titled "One of the larger Stikeen [sic] Glaciers 15 miles up descends within 200 ft of sea level" set the focus of the first Stikine River excursion.[461] Muir's written observations appear to have been written later, perhaps after he arrived in Glenora, for they surround the sketches, and generally do not coincide with the chronology of the sketches or the itinerary of the excursion.[462] The field notes deal with an encapsulation of Muir's glacial theory gleaned from the sum total of his observations and experiences while following his rather wandering route around Vancouver Island and Puget Sound, the inland passages of British Columbia and Alaska, and up the Stikine River.

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[458] *John Muir Papers,* Series III A, Nevada and Alaska Essay, AMSS (notebook) File 00024, page 59. See also Badè notebook 24.

[459] Alaska Geographic Society. *The Stikine River.* Alaska Geographic Quarterly, Vol. 6, No. 4. (Anchorage: Alaska Geographic, 1979), 56. The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) had a mobile presence on the Stikine River. As a result of the ongoing boundary dispute between Canada and the United States, as well as for economic reasons, the HBC constructed and abandoned posts along the Stikine throughout the 1800's. The abandoned post indicated by Muir was most probably the HBC trading post operated by Buck Choquette at the confluence of the Anuk River from 1869 to 1873. The 'Beaver Wreck' Muir noted refers to the broken hull of the steamer *Beaver*, which was irreparably damaged in May, 1878 when it hit a rock approximately 60 miles downstream from Glenora.

[460] *John Muir Papers,* Series III A, Nevada and Alaska Essays, Reel 32. Accession no. 00024, p. 59.

[461] *John Muir Papers,* Series II, 00028, Journal 63, 52-4. It is curious that interspersed within his Stikine River sketches Muir placed a diagram depicting his theory of glacial moraine deposition at sea level, and a sketch of the effects of mirage effects observed 30 miles from Wrangell – both of phenomena observed while on the coast. Why are these drawings intermittent with his Stikine River sketches? I can only surmise that he either sketched the coast pictures from memory, or while still exploring the coast had skipped ahead in his journal to an arbitrary open page to make the hasty sketches.

It appears that Muir's rather single-minded focus on glaciology during the first trip up the Stikine stemmed, in good part, from the stinging criticisms of his Yosemite glacial theories by professional geologists. Glimpses of Muir's determination to hold his own with the academics can be seen in his field journal. "Many detailed proof-facts will be required to compel the assent to this in the minds of most geologists on account of the defectiveness of education glacial in gen[eral] and in special. But the glacial millenium will come," he wrote while on the Stikine River.[463] In search of irrefutable 'proof-facts', it is understandable that Muir's field journal of the first trip up the Stikine primarily reflected his focus on glacial action and landscape formation. No raptures on the beauty of flowers and trees, no glimpses of the wilderness mystic can be seen in the smudged pencil notes of this particular journal. If glaciology was the impetus for the northern excursion, then glacial 'proof-facts' he found in abundance.

While in the High Sierra, Muir had not been able to ascertain where the water-rounded moraine material of the small and medium Sierra glaciers had been deposited. Referring to the observations of Agassiz and others in Switzerland, and to his own observations on Vancouver Island of clear evidence of large depositions of moraine materials, Muir deduced that the moraine material had been rounded and then roughly stratified beneath the glaciers by streams of melted ice water.[464] The moraine material, Muir observed, filled the channels of the retreating glaciers, the larger boulders gradually wasted by erosion, and the glacial flour was carried away by melt water torrents. Further, Muir deduced that the bottom of valleys or bays, after the retreat of glaciers, would be covered with moraine material, and if the material was fine and deposited on a gradual slope, it could be seen as bedrock, an effective mask of its true glacial origin. All of this combined, Muir believed, explained why there was little "visible traceable mor[aine] matter found in connection with profound canons and heavily degraded ranges."[465] Muir felt he had an answer to his Sierra glacier moraine riddle – an observational 'proof-fact' that would bear up under the sceptical counter-arguments of professional geologists.

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[462] Muir's last written notes in this journal are on the advance of forest along the side-slopes vacated by retreating glaciers, and the surprising lack of visible glacial polish. These notes are sandwiched between his last two sketches, pictures of the view S.E. of Glenora and of Telegraph Creek., indicating that he wrote these glacial observations after arriving in Glenora.

[463] *John Muir Papers,* Journal 63. Also in Badè Journal Number 20, File 00028, 28.

[464] *John Muir Papers,* Journal 63, Notebook 20, File 00028, 25-6.

Viewing the Stikine River glaciers spilling down from the great Stikine Icefield, Muir also noted his explanation of the existence of cross fiords on the west coast, where inlets were carved by the great ancient icesheet in perpendicular patterns to the general east-west bearing of the great ancient ice sheet. Muir could see this pattern occurring on the Stikine River. "That these so-called channels, straits, reaches, inlets, bays, sounds, etc. were eroded from the solid by gl[acial]action I have no more doubt than that the small hollows and canons in the m[oun]t[ain]s at the head of wh[ich] the gl[aciers] are still seen at work were so eroded."[466]

These observations, among others, were one of the best outcomes of Muir's first Stikine River excursion – a contribution to Muir's overall understanding and deductions of actual living, working glaciers and their landscape-making action. The total focus on scientific observations and deductions within the journal entries during this first trip up the Stikine may also have been the result of Muir's inability to gain direct and prolonged access to the glaciers. The Muir who melded scientific observation with ecstatic wilderness experience was not apparent. While lack of direct access to ice may have yielded interesting scientific facts due to Muir's discerning eye, the wilderness mystic was not in evidence – at least, not yet.

The *Cassiar* arrived at Glenora at 6:25 p.m. on July 30th. In 1879, the village of Glenora was a ramshackle assembly of tents and log shanties erected along Hudson's Bay Flat, a strip of level land bordering the river on the north-west bank, approximately 19 kilometres downstream of Telegraph Creek.[467] Today, the village site can be reached via gravel road from the village of Telegraph Creek, and is marked by an old graveyard, vestiges of log cabins, and a long grass-covered mound that marked the hopeful but short-lived start of a railroad to the Yukon during the 1897 Klondike Gold Rush.[468]

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[465] Ibid.

[466] Ibid. 27.

[467] Gary Fiegehen , *Stikine – The Great River*, 127.

[468] Little remains today of Glenora, but the village experienced the rise and fall of three gold rushes. The first rush from 1861-62 along the reaches near Glenora and Telegraph Creek was followed by the Cassiar Gold Rush from 1873-76, and then the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897-98, when up to 3500 people

Upon arriving, Muir found only one store open, and that the place was abuzz with the news of a recent murder.[469] Perhaps in search of a respite from the drama in the village, Muir wandered to a quiet spot along the river and sketched the view from Glenora looking downstream towards the coastal ranges. Muir's "View looking S.E. from Glenora" is remarkably accurate depiction of the landscape.[470] The *Cassiar* did not stay long in Glenora, but set sail July 31st at 3:10 a.m. for the head of navigation, Telegraph Creek. After lining the steamer over two sets of rapids, the last noted as 'Miller's Bar rapid', the *Cassiar* landed at Telegraph Creek at 9:15 a.m.[471]

With the morning left free to explore, Muir walked up Telegraph Creek and rendered a quick pencil sketch of the steep walled gorge but he made no other notation in his journal of the rough little village.

Telegraph Creek received its name in 1866 as the intended crossing of the Stikine River by the Collins Overland Telegraph.[472] Once established as the head of navigation on the Stikine River, the village experienced another small boom during the Cassiar gold rush in 1873-76. The Cassiar Trail, the overland route north to Dease Lake and the Cassiar Gold Fields begins at Telegraph Creek, effectively making the small community the logical transportation hub in the region. Although the Cassiar gold rush was beginning to wind down in 1879, Telegraph Creek still received cargo goods from the sternwheelers to supply the remaining placer miners in the region.[473]

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wintered there on their way to the Yukon. See Alaska Geographic, *The Stikine River,* 39, and Sylvia Allbright, *Tahltan Ethnoarchaeology*, 18.

[469] Alaska Geographic, *The Stikine River,* 49. The Hudson Bay Store at Glenora was closed in 1876, so the store referred to by Muir was most probably operated by an independent merchant.

[470] See Gary Fiegehen, *Stikine: the Great River,* 80-1, for a beautiful contemporary photograph of the Stikine River, Sawback Range and terraced hills and flats at Glenora, to which Muir's sketch is an amazingly concise representation of the same landscape.

[471] Geological and Natural History Survey of Canada, Annual Report Vol. III, Pt. 1, Reports A,B,C,E,F, 1887-88, (Montreal, William Foster Brown & Co, 1889), 79B-80B. The locus of the Stikine gold rush in 1861, Miller's Bar, Buck's Bar, Shake's Bar, Carpenter's and Fiddlers Bar were all within the Stikine River reaches extending from approximately 9 miles downstream of Glenora to the beginning of the Grand Canyon upstream of Telegraph Creek.

[472] Western Union Telegraph had ambitiously planned a grand scheme to link the United States to Europe through a telegraph line that spanned British Columbia, Alaska, the Bering Strait, and Russia. In 1866, the sternwheeler *Mumford* made it to Telegraph Creek with a load of telegraph wire and other supplies, effectively extending the head of navigation past Glenora to Telegraph Creek. With the completion of the trans-Atlantic cable in 1867, the Collins Overland Telegraph project was abandoned.

[473] Allen Stanley Trueman, "Placer Gold Mining in Northern British Columbia 1860-1880", M.A. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1935, 102-103, British Columbia Provincial Archives, Victoria,

Muir re-boarded the Cassiar at 1:43 p.m., and arrived back at Glenora at 2:24 p.m. It was a warm and very windy afternoon, effectively keeping the *Cassiar* safely docked at Glenora, for steering through the Little Canyon became impossible in high winds.[474] Electing to use the remainder of the summer afternoon and long northern evening light, Muir decided to climb Glenora Mountain, directly north-west of the village. The young missionary, S. Hall Young, convinced Muir that he would be an able companion for the climb, and the two set off together to scale the mountain. Unfortunately, near the top of the mountain, Hall Young fell and dislocated both of his shoulder joints.

Muir's rescue of S. Hall Young, the young missionary from Wrangell, on Glenora Peak was, for Muir, simply an exercise in pragmatic necessity.[475] Helping Hall Young down the mountain drew on Muir's strength and mountaineering nerve. Muir's cheerfulness throughout the long cold night, and his fortitude in dealing with the painful re-setting of Hall Young's dislocated shoulder joints indicate a staunch frontier do-it-yourself practicality. By 7:00 a.m. on August 1st, Muir had managed to escort his companion off the mountain and have him safely delivered to bed rest aboard the *Cassiar* before it set sail for Wrangell.

Muir's field journal notes are succinct on the climb up Glenora Mountain, "July 31. Up Glenora Pk at 3:20 PM reached summit nearly at sunset. Back to Glenora at 7 a.m. Aug 1" followed by a short cryptic note at the bottom of the page, "a night of it", circled for emphasis. What actually happened on the mountain was, and is still regarded as part of the Muir legend – the story of a mountaineering rescue that Muir included in *Travels in Alaska* only after a sensationalized rendition of the experience was published in what Muir noted as a 'respectable' magazine.[476]

For Muir, however, the actual experience of the climb up the mountain had been the fascinating and noteworthy element of the day. After long days of confinement on the Cassiar and with time enough to reach the peak for the glory of a sunset view of the entire region, Muir was in his natural element. In

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B.C. According to Trueman's analysis, the Cassiar Gold Fields yielded at total of $1,150,000.00 in 1874, but this declined to $542,600.00 in 1879.

[474] S. Hall Young, "Alaska Days with John Muir" in *John Muir: His Life and Letters and Other Writings*, 626.

[475] John Muir, "Travels in Alaska" in *EWDB*, 744-46. Muir's account of the Glenora Mountain rescue of S. Hall Young was published in *Travels in Alaska* and S. Hall Young's personal account of the climb and subsequent rescue is described in "Alaska Days with John Muir" in *John Muir: His Life and Letters and other Writings*, 625-36.

[476] John Muir, "Travels in Alaska" in *EWDB*, 746.

Alaska Days with John Muir, S. Hall Young wrote a personal account of the Glenora Peak experience, and from his observations, it is possible to gain a sense of the wilderness mystic, freed through joyous exercise, fresh air, and immersion in natural beauty.

> Muir led, of course, picking with sure instinct the easiest way. Three hours of steady work brought us suddenly beyond timber-line, and the real joy of the day began. Nowhere else have I seen anything approaching the luxuriance and variety of delicate blossoms shown by these high, mountain pastures of the North…Muir at once went wild when we reached this fairyland. From cluster to cluster of flowers he ran, falling on his knees, babbling in unknown tongues, prattling a curious mixture of scientific lingo and baby talk, worshipping his little blue-and-pink goddesses.[477]

Hall Young's personal narrative of the Glenora Peak experience is an informative first-hand glimpse into how Muir interacted with boundless joy to the mountain, and as such, tells us much about the power of Muir's example to others, and the integrity of his love of nature. "So absorbed…he seemed to forget my existence…" Hall Young wrote, "…While I…learning something of plant life, but far more of that spiritual insight into Nature's lore which is granted only to those who love and woo her in her great outdoor palaces."[478] Even more noteworthy, Hall Young wrote "…here was a man whose natural science had a thorough technical basis, while the super-structure was built of "lively stones," and was itself a living temple of love!"[479] Lively stones indeed! The mountain was 'living', the sunset was drawing nigh, and both men were in joyous transport among the flowers and wild mountain beauty.

The return trip to Wrangel aboard the *Cassiar* was swift. The steamer arrived at Buck's at 1:30 p.m., departed from the Ice Mountain at 3:15 the morning of August 2nd, and subsequently arrived in Wrangell at 7:00 a.m. Muir's first trip up the Stikine was over, and while the excursion had been interesting and provided some understanding of the natural history of the area, Muir still had not achieved time and opportunity to explore the great ice rivers.

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[477] S. Hall Young, "Alaska Days with John Muir", 627.

[478] Ibid.

[479] Ibid.

The Second Trip up the Stikine – Gold Fields and Ice Rivers

Muir remained in Wrangell for approximately two weeks, waiting for the next opportunity to sail up the Stikine to Telegraph Creek, gain the summit of Glenora Mountain once more, and explore the Stikine River Glaciers. On either August 13th or 14th, Muir boarded the steamer *Gertrude* for Telegraph Creek. On board, however, after a conversation with a fellow passenger who expounded on the scenic marvels of the interior, Muir decided to change his plans and travel inland to the working gold fields of the Cassiar region.

Upon arriving in Telegraph Creek on either August 15th or 16th, Muir set out on the Cassiar Trail, a rough overland route linking Telegraph Creek with the gold fields north and west of Dease Lake.[480] With the discovery of gold north of Dease Lake on Thibert Creek in 1873, the trail became the conduit for the influx of miners hoping to strike it rich and the provisions they needed to work during the short summer season. Winter in the Cassiar was long and hard with periods of extreme cold, and over-wintering was not only difficult, but often dangerous.[481] Most miners came upriver from Wrangell and over the Cassiar Trail in the spring, with a matching exodus in the fall to spend winter in Wrangell, southern B.C or the United States.

Following the west side of the great river, the Cassiar Trail ascended to a broad terrace, and wound through forests along the rim of the lower reaches of the Grand Canyon of the Stikine. After approximately 18 kilometres, the trail descended into the canyon to the first north fork - the confluence of the Stikine and Tahltan rivers. Here, Muir came upon a major summer fishing camp of the Tahltan people, and wrote a short but observant account of their activities. "They were living in large booths with many stout cross beams on which the salmon were hung to dry" he wrote, and went on to describe the method of constructing the 'booths', how the salmon and roe were preserved through smoking, and the activities of the people. "Some of the Indians were sleeping, some braiding ropes, some sitting and lounging, gossiping and courting, a little baby was swinging in a hammock, a merry, easy going set with work enough and wit enough to maintain health and abundance."[482] While there was an underlying tone of mild surprise in Muir's account of the Tahltan people, he certainly recognized and noted the social cohesiveness and industry of the people, and his observations have been useful within contemporary ethno-archaeology.[483]

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[480] Today, the road that links Dease Lake and Telegraph Creek generally follows the same route of the old Cassiar Trail, with some short deviations.

[481] Robert Campbell, "Two Journals of Robert Campbell – Chief Factor Hudson's Bay Company, 1808 – 1851", limited edition, (Seattle: John W. Todd Jr., 1958). Robert Campbell and his company were forced to spend the winter of 1838-39 at Dease Lake, and were beset with hostile marauding natives, starvation and relentless cold.

Semi-nomadic, the Tahltan clans would gather at permanent fishing villages and sites during the summer salmon runs, and then break into smaller family groups to hunt and set up dispersed family camps during the fall, winter and spring seasons.[484] Summer was a time of plenty, when the people would gather to feast, trade and socialize with other families and clans. "In proto-historic times at least, all Tahltan clans recognized the area around the Stikine-Tahltan confluence as the tribal headquarters, and most families visited there annually either to fish or trade."[485]

When Muir walked through the Tahltan-Stikine confluence fishing camps in 1879, the Tahltan were taking advantage of the end of the summer salmon run, which extended from the middle of June to mid-August, and were busy preparing critical food stores for the long winter months. Today, smokehouses similar in construction to those described by Muir can still be seen at the confluence, and although they no longer use traps and weirs, the Tahltan continue to set nets and smoke fish during the yearly salmon runs. Muir also did not note of a Tahltan village near the confluence, a communal village that the Tahltan created to gather all the surviving families and clans together after being decimated by smallpox epidemics in the early and mid 1800's.[486] Some of the buildings of this old Tahltan village remain standing today, including a church constructed by missionaries in 1901.

The confluence of these two rivers remains a site of profoundly felt power. The outline of a great bird with a wingspan of several metres can be seen emerging from the crumbling basalt layers of the cliff wall across from the Tahltan-Stikine confluence - a great Raven, or "Cheskie," symbol of Tahltan clans who still hunt and fish in the confluence region.[487] Muir was so taken with the site, that he included a detailed sketch in his field journal, clearly showing the basalt rock formations of this part of the Grand Canyon of the Stikine, and the placement of Tahltan smokehouses at the confluence.[488]

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[482] *John Muir Papers,* File 06742, Journal transcription, 2nd Trip up the Stikine, pgs 7-8.

[483] Sylvia Albright, *Tahltan Ethnoarchaeology,* 70.

[484] Ibid. 12-3.

[485] Ibid. 13.

[486] Geological and Natural History Survey of Canada, Annual Report Vol. III, Pt. 1, Reports A,B,C,E,F, 1887-88, 65B. The village was noted in Geological and Natural History Survey of Canada 1887 – 1888 as being abandoned. The village was constructed at some point after the smallpox epidemics of 1832-38, and 1847-49, and the influx of miners during the 1874 gold rush to the Cassiar region. During this time, the population of the Tahltan had been reduced from between 1000-1500 to 300-325. See also Sylvia Albright, *Tahltan Ethnoarchaeology,* 16-17.

After crossing the Tahltan River, Muir followed the Cassiar Trail as it climbed the high northern bank of the Stikine Canyon and ran parallel to the river, providing views of the deepening canyon walls and the basalt layers laid down by successive flows of ancient volcanoes.[489] The canyon deepens in this stretch, and Muir took the time to note the depth of layers and a sketch the basalt infill of a water-eroded fissure on the east wall of the Stikine canyon; a geological anomaly that remains highly visible from a rest area off the Telegraph Creek road.

Not far from the basalt cliff viewpoint, the trail came to "Ward's", a rough way station along the Cassiar Trail. Today, a ranch marks the historic Ward's station, set on a high wide bench along the rim of the Grand Canyon of the Stikine. The modern road follows the general direction of the old trail, leaving its parallel route with the Stikine Canyon and ascending 'Ward's Hill'. Rising 1000 feet above the Stikine River, the trail traversed a broad forested upland before descending, once more, into a canyon that marked the second north fork off the Stikine, and the crossing of the Tuya River, approximately 10 kilometres from the Tahltan-Stikine confluence.[490]

At the Tuya River, Muir descended the trail through the 600-foot gorge, cut through deep layers of terrace deposits by the cascading torrent. Luckily for Muir, the Tuya crossing was facilitated by a small sturdy bridge, and he was spared the experience of crossing the historic "Terror Bridge."[491] Ascending approximately 900 feet over the next kilometre, Muir followed the Cassiar Trail out of the Tuya canyon onto a high level plateau. Here, "Wilson's" provided a brief rest stop before Muir continued on to 'Caribou Camp', a gentle 22 kilometre walk across the level plateau country that separates the canyons of the Stikine and Tuya Rivers, and the lower reaches of the third north fork of the Stikine – the Tanzilla River.[492]

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[487] Sylvia Albright, *Tahltan Ethnoarchaeology*, 10-13. Allbright discusses the Tahltan tribal divisions between the Raven and Wolf Phratry, with the Raven clan "Tudenekoten", proto-historically considered the highest ranked clan, geographically situated in the area around the confluence of the Tahltan and Stikine Rivers.

[488] *John Muir Papers,* Series II, AMS (journal) 73, From Wrangell Up Stickeen 2^{d} Trip to the Cassiar Mines.

[489] Ancient Level Mountain to the north, 15 million years old, and Mount Edziza to the east, active for 7.5 million years, contributed to the successive basaltic layers of landscape formation in the Stikine River region. See Gary Fiegehen, *Stikine: The Great River,* 125-26.

[490] Geological and Natural History Survey of Canada, Annual Report Vol. III, Pt. 1 Reports A,B,C,E,F, 1887-1888, Montreal: William Foster Brown & Co. 1889, 66B.

Muir's field journal indicates that he was only interested in observations of geological points of interest, and of the forest and plant cover. He does not observe much in the way of glacial action on the mountains and hills, though their rounded contours should have been apparent as the work of ice, but Muir did recognize the extent of overall glacial denudation in the immense layers of gravel deposits throughout the region.

Even more interestingly, the overwhelming evidence of volcanic activity along the Stikine, and especially near the Tahltan confluence was of such a profound character that it would have sparked the heart of even the most introverted geologist. But with Muir, the landscape born of fire warranted no specific discussion and only a few notes and scattered sketches. The sketch he made just above the Tahltan confluence of a fourth basalt flow that filled a small tributary canyon was especially telling of the power of volcanic activity in the area. In his final published *work Travels in Alaska,* Muir devotes one sentence to the phenomena, but nothing of the mystic sensitivity so apparent in his raptures about ice. One can only speculate on the reason why – perhaps he was simply not that interested in volcanic landscape creation, and his knowledge and focus on glaciers eclipsed other geological phenomena. Or perhaps he felt that volcanic landscapes were too close to his father's Calvinist depictions of hell, and along with his rejection of his father's dogmatic creed came a level of avoidance of 'hellish' landscapes. Whatever the reason, both Muir's field journal and published book do not do justice to the work of ancient volcanoes, for it is writ large and indelibly throughout the region.

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[491] Robert Campbell, "Two Journals of Robert Campbell (Chief Factor Hudson's Bay Company) 1808 – 1853", limited edition, (Seattle: John W. Wood , 1958). In 1838, Hudson Bay Company explorer, Robert Campbell, crossed the "rude ricketty [sic] structure…" that he described as being "…so frail & unstable & the rushing waters below so formidable that it seemed well nigh impossible to cross it."

[492] Both 'Wilson's' and 'Caribou Camp' can be visited today. All that is left of 'Wilson's' is a deserted meadow enclosed by forest, and Caribou Meadows, though considered abandoned, remains a seasonal camping site for hunters and local people.

From Caribou Camp, Muir followed the trail along the northwest bank of the Tanzilla River, an ancient route long used by the Tahltan as a trading conduit between the interior tribes and the coastal Tlingit. The modern road generally follows the same route as the old trail, traversing a range of mountains bearing north/south. While Muir recognized the glacial history of the range, which includes Snow Peak north of the Tanzilla and the Hotailuh Range to the south, it was not until he arrived in Dease Lake that he was able to clearly discern the path of ancient glaciers.

Visualizing the great ice river from the north, Muir superimposed it into the 40 kilometre long lake, and likened the rounded high summit of Mt. McLeod to the west of Dease Lake as distinctly similar to Yosemite's granite domes. Rough field journal sketches indicate Muir's deductions regarding the nature of glaciation in the Dease Lake environs. He saw the ranges to the east and west as walls to the great reach of ice from the north, and the stratified gravel deposits within the inter-range valley around Dease Lake as deposits from glacial runoff. "It is plain…" he concluded about the Dease Lake environs, "… that wide as it is and flat bottomed as it is its origin is glacial."[493] Interestingly, none of these glacial ruminations appeared in *Travels in Alaska.* While these explorations were new to Muir in the summer of 1879, and comparisons to Yosemite were still very much on his mind, the *Travels in Alaska* had a lifetime of glacial studies to draw upon, including the exploration of Glacier Bay in Alaska. This does not, however, negate that at this point in Muir's life, the direct observations he made and the glacial evidence he found throughout the Stikine region contributed substantially to his overall vision of large-scale landscape formation.

Lake House, at the south end of Dease Lake, served as a steamboat landing and trail way station that connected the Cassiar Trail to the working gold fields in the Dease Lake and Cassiar region. After the Cassiar Gold Rush of 1874 was sparked by a rich find on Thibert Creek in 1873, gold was subsequently found along Dease Creek, a tributary of Dease Lake flowing from the high country west of the lake, and on Defot and McDame Creeks to the north. The gold rush town of Laketon, at the confluence of Dease Creek and Dease Lake, became the hub of trade and mining activity in the region. Porter Landing, the steamboat landing at the north end of Dease Lake, also became a depot for supplying provisions for miners in the Cassiar region.

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[493] *John Muir Papers,* Series II, 00027, From Wrangell up Stickeen 2d Trip to Cassiar Mines, AMS journal 73, 1879, p. 23. Muir's glacial observations were correct, in so far as they went, as a Canadian Geological Survey in 1887 substantiated the glacial influenced landscape formations along the Cassiar Trail and in the Dease Lake area. See also Geological and Natural History Survey of Canada, Report B, Volume III, Part 1, 1887-88.

Muir followed the trail along the west shore of Dease Lake to Laketon, where it appears he spent some time exploring the natural features of the vicinity, though, tellingly, there is no mention of Laketon itself. After noting the beauty of spruce trees on the Dease Creek delta, Muir then made an excellent pencil drawing of a view of Dease Lake, taken from a hill directly behind Laketon. Another sketch, taken from another point along the trail north of Laketon, shows the lake in 'sunshine and rain 2 O'clock pm". Once again, the sketches lead the narrative in his field journal, as the written descriptions surrounding these sketches also include information on Thibert Creek, to the north-west of Porter Landing at the northern end of Dease Lake.

The gold workings along both Dease and Thibert Creeks were very much a part of the human landscape, and Muir took some time to make quick notes of their relative productivity, but remained more interested in the natural landscape than gold mining. During the period from 1873-74, the Cassiar district had yielded approximately 1 million dollars in gold, but by the time Muir walked into the region in 1879, the yearly tally had dropped to around $400,000.00.[494] The region would continue to produce workable claims for years, but by 1887 the yearly output was further reduced to $60,000.00, causing Laketon, Thibert, Defot and the McDame Creek areas to gradually fade into obscurity.[495]

Upon reaching Porter Landing, Muir elected to make his way up Thibert Creek, which flows from high rounded mountains to the west. The first four to five miles of the creek were the most productive for mining, and Muir committed the mining and landscape to memory with an excellent sketch of the creek and mining works about five miles above its confluence with the Dease River. Dams, flumes and cabins are readily seen in the sketch, showing the extent of gold mining in the lower reaches of the Thibert drainage, and providing a true-to-life record of gold mining in that era.

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[494] Geological and Natural History Survey of Canada, 1887-88, p. 78B-79B.

[495] Ibid, 80-81B. Today, some gold mining continues in the McDame Creek area, and a gold mine has been established up Muddy Creek, north of Telegraph Creek.

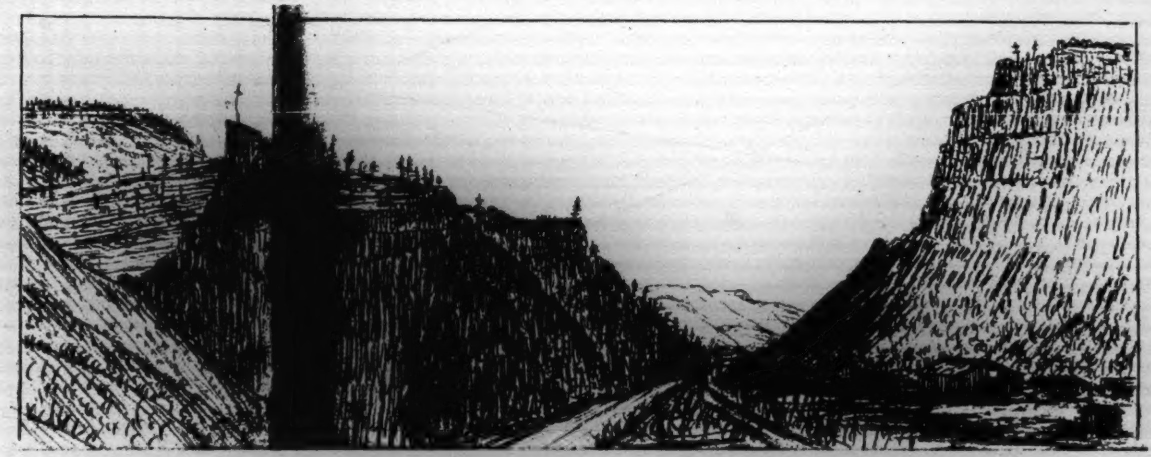

Figure 5. "Confluence of the 1st N[orth] F[ork] of the Stikeen." Pencil sketch in Muir's Field Journal – August 1879. Sketch depicts the unique basalt formation and Tahltan smokehouses at the confluence of the Tahltan and Stikeen Rivers in northwestern British Columbia.

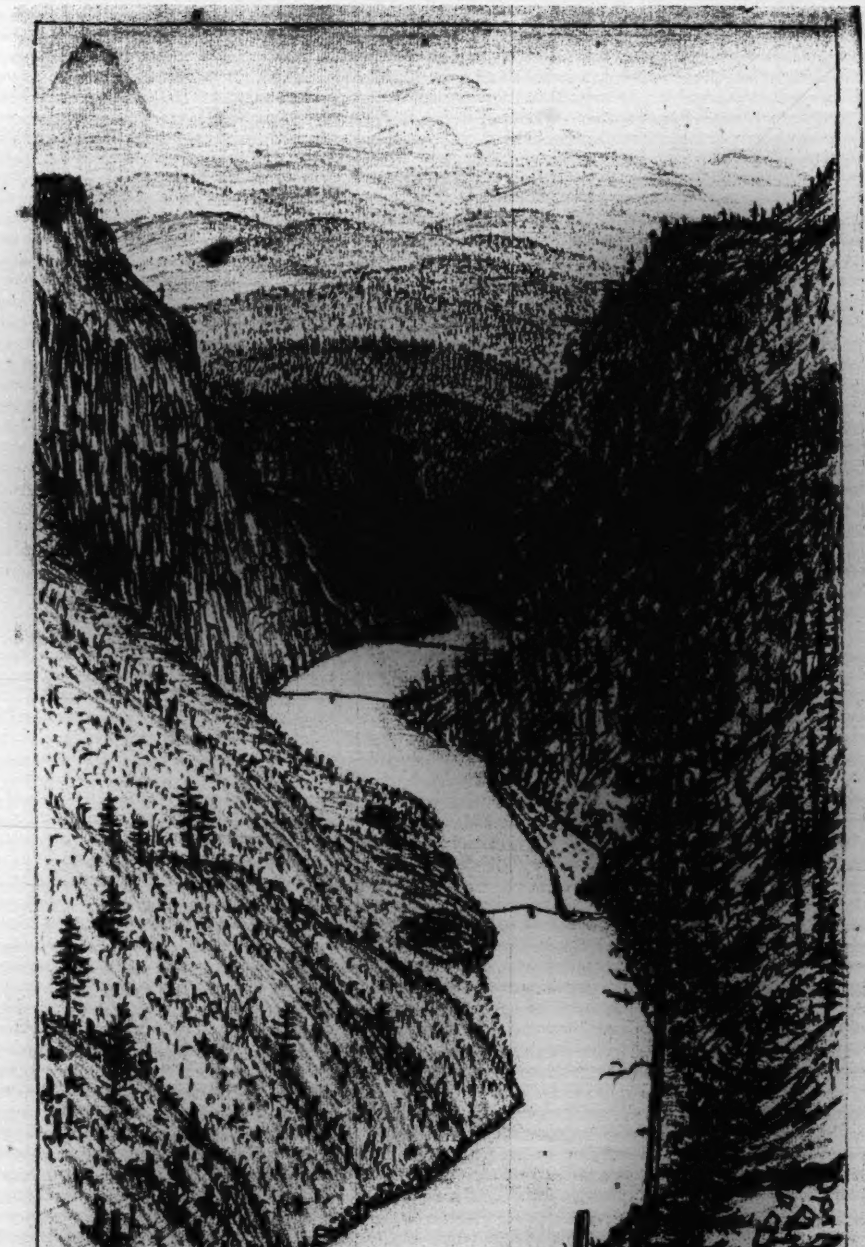

Figure 6. "Thibert Creek. From 5 mi[les] ab[ove] ??? cr[eek]." Pencil sketch in Muir's Field Journal, August, 1879. Sketch depicts topography and gold work camps along Thibert Creek in the Cassiar Gold Fields of northwestern British Columbia.

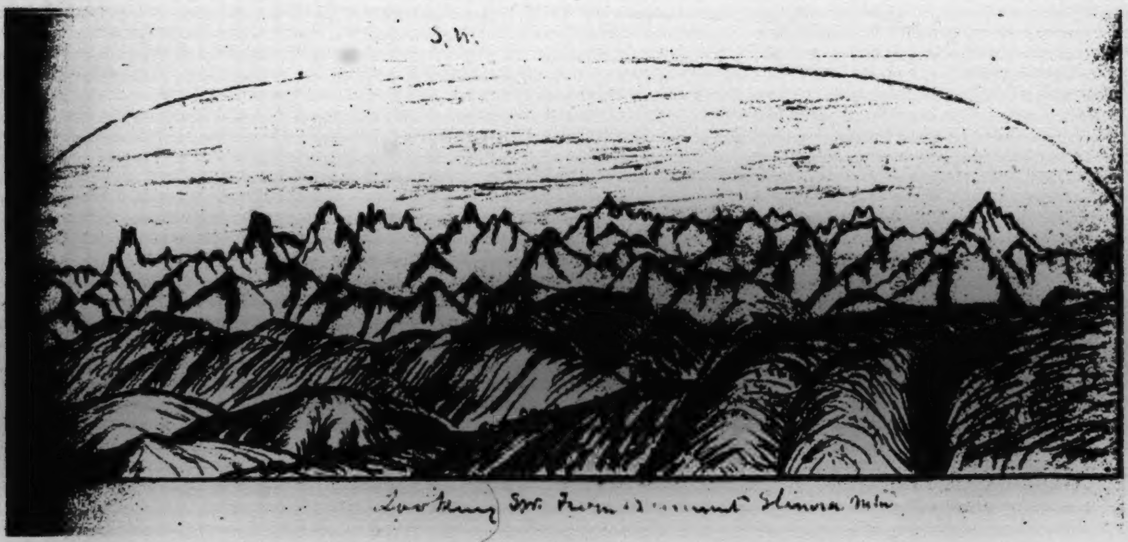
S. W.
Looking SW from Summit Glenora Mtn

Figure 7. "Looking SW [southwest] from Summit Glenora Mt." Pencil sketch in Muir Field Journal, August, 1879. Sketch depicts range of sharp peaked coastal ranges viewed to the southwest of Glenora Mountain in northwestern British Columbia.

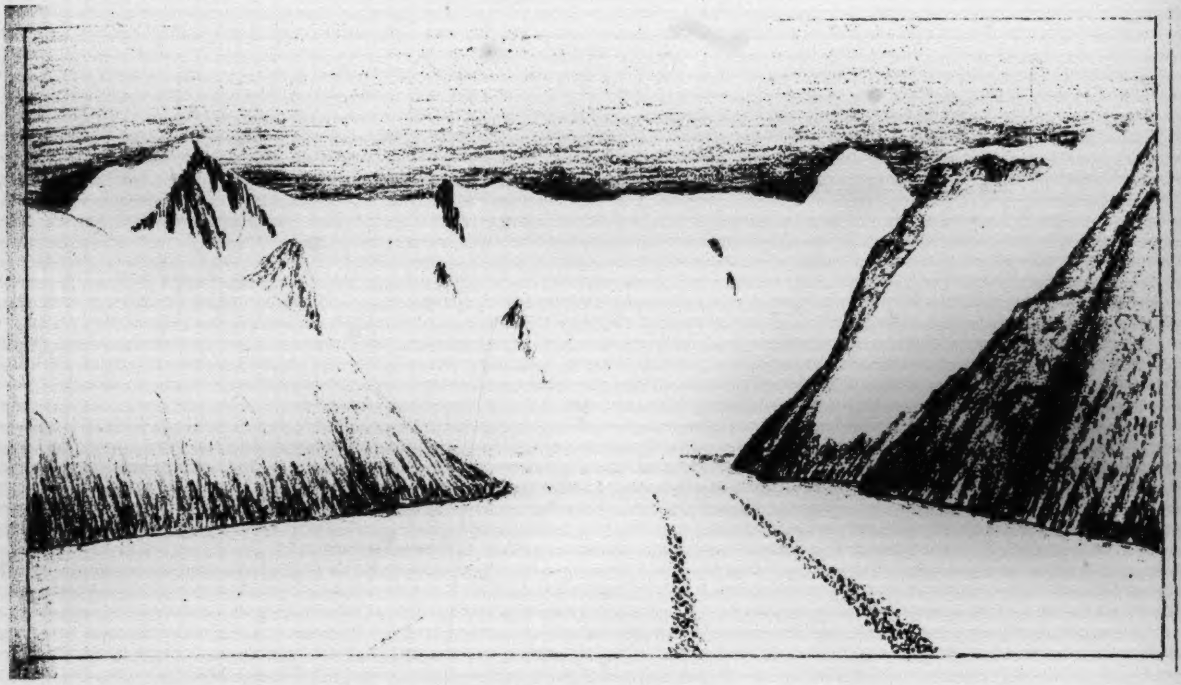

Figure 8. Untitled drawing in Muir's Field Journal, August, 1879. Sketch is of the glacier that Muir called 'Toyatte Glacier', but is now known as the 'Flood Glacier'.

Figure 9. ‘gr[ea]t glacier at Buck’s from L[ef] bank of smaller glacier. Distance from snout 6 mi[les].” Pencil drawing of the Great Glacier in Muir’s Field Journal, August, 1879.

At the Fountains of Rivers with Arnie LeClaire

At some point in his wanderings along Thibert Creek, Muir met a gold miner, Arnie LeClaire, who invited Muir to his gold claim near the headwaters of Defot Creek. In 1879, LeClaire was 50 years old and an old-timer to placer gold mining.[937] Born in Ontario of French Canadian parents, LeClaire had a permanent residence in James Bay Ward in Victoria, and with his wife, Marie, had several children.[938] For Muir, meeting LeClaire was heartening. Amid the rough work of mining and the rough ways of miners, Muir found in LeClaire a kindred spirit, a "…simple, childlike love of nature, preserved undimmed through a hard wilderness life…delightful to see."[939] The two men made their way up Thibert Creek, and then turned right to ascend Porcupine Creek. Making their way past scattered mining works, they eventually reached LeClaire's cabin, situated approximately a mile from the head of Porcupine Creek.[940] Here, Muir's host immediately introduced him to his favorite flower, the lovely forget-me-not, and the birds and animals living near the cabin. "His love for birds & fl[owe]rs is beautiful…" Muir noted in his field journal, "…and marks him sharply among his companions."[941]

After a quick luncheon, the two men walked to the dividing ridge a mile or so from the cabin where Muir was able to gain general views of the area. On their return, snow began to fall, and they retired early in LeClaire's tiny cabin, stretching out on blankets over the dirt floor and talking late into the night.

Late that evening, lit by the flickering light of LeClaires' little fireplace, Muir penned a short letter to Louie Strentzel. "I have at last been blest by the good lord in being allowed to taste of this wild and beautiful Northland away back at the fountains of the rivers" he wrote, and continued with a brief description of LeClaire, the early snowfall and his plans to return to Wrangell. What is perhaps more telling is that during Muir's 1879 excursion this was only the second letter written directly to Louie Strentzel herself, and not to the entire Strentzel family. Muir's decision to write to Louie so late that night, "...am on the dirt floor, about eleven o'clock, but thought of you..." may have actually been prompted by Muir's meeting Arnie LeClaire. "I wish you could see him" he wrote to Louie, "...how the firelight glows on his face as he talks about the birds and animals." Muir's affinity to LeClaire may not have rested solely on the old miner's love of nature, but also on the rhythm of life, work and family obligations, set to the seasons, that LeClaire lived and enjoyed. Always, at the back of his mind, Muir knew that Louie was waiting. As the summer progressed, his explorations of the north region brought more 'truth facts' on glaciation and the promise of prolonged study on real living glaciers, but also a niggling reticence to address his original plan to return to California in the fall. Return meant marriage, family responsibility and work on the Strentzel ranch, and ultimately, Muir feared, the loss of wilderness exploration. But here, with Arnie LeClaire, Muir saw the possibility of something different, a balance between wilderness life and family responsibility. LeClaire had nine children and a wife in Victoria, but each spring he headed north to work on the gold sprinkled creeks of the Cassiar, and to enjoy the birds, flowers and animals that he loved. From Muir's standpoint, LeClaire's existence would have appeared almost idyllic. "He loves flowers too, I am sure, and is a gentleman; but how wild." Muir wrote to Louie, with perhaps a veiled reference to himself. Seeing the possibility for a balance in his life somewhat like LeClaire's, Muir's growing reticence to acknowledging his emotional commitment to Louie was, at least for the time being, put to rest.

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[937] Victoria Census, 1881, British Columbia Archives and Records Service, Victoria, B.C.,

[938] Ibid. The Victoria Census of 1881 lists Arnie LeClaire's wife as Marie, age 42, and three children still living with their parents – Maximillian age 12, Wilfred age 10, and Charles age 8. In 1879 Muir noted that LeClaire had 9 children, that the older daughters were married, and that LeClaire's youngest was 8 years of age.

[939] John Muir, "Travels in Alaska" in *EWDB,* 759.

[940] *John Muir Papers,* Journal 73, 26-8. Muir's route to LeClaire's claim is unclear, though he does note in his field journal "At Porcupine Creek 5400 ft. Tributary of Thibert Creek" which would place him at a high point between the Thibert and Defot drainages. He also notes that they "…ascended Porcupine Creek…my companion has a claim a mile ahead…" which may have put him on or near the divide between Thibert and Defot Creeks. This is also supported by Muir's notes that the trail was steep and slippery, difficult and uneven (although he later edited these last two adjectives from his journal).

[941] *John Muir Papers,* Journal 73, 28.

The next morning, "... a dreary December morning in August", Muir elected to gain extensive views of the region from the top of Porcupine Mountain, but low clouds kept him to the ridge top he'd explored the previous afternoon with LeClaire. From the ridge, Muir was able to see a great sweep of northern wilderness 100 miles distant, and noted several landmarks in his field journal. Looking north to northwest, Muir noticed a high range of mountains, likely the Atsutla Range, beyond which he noted the "Turkon " River.[942] While there is no river by this name, the Teslin River drains a large lake filled region beyond the Atsultla Range, and then flows northwest into Teslin Lake. Muir also noted the rolling brown region between two conical mountains on the near side of the Atsultla Range, most likely a part of the extensive volcanic region of the Kawdy Plateau. A multitude of lakes, one 4 miles long, were also duly noted, and may have been the lake region near the headwaters of the Tuya River, or of the Tachilta Lakes area. Looking southwest, Muir also described the range from which both Dease and Thibert Creeks arise, as being around 6000 feet high, and beyond that, across the 2nd north fork of the Stikine (the Tuya River), the highest range visible – the Level Mountain environs. Remarkable also, noted Muir, were the extensive grassy expanses above tree-line at 5000 feet, full of a type of bunch grass growing in abundance and providing productive habitat for caribou. These extensive views, near the divide between Pacific and Arctic watersheds, were the most northern point of Muir's exploration of the Stikine River and Cassiar region.

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[942] *John Muir Papers,* Journal 73, 30.

Glenora Peak

"Rough food, rough beds and rough manners…" were Muir's lot on the return trip to Glenora from the Cassiar region.[943] Although he wrote for *Travels in Alaska* a more benign rendition, "…I sauntered back …happy and rich without a particle of gold-dust care", Muir's experience along the Cassiar Trail was, in truth, a journey of hunger and fatigue. "No 'roughing' it in the outlands of Cal[ifornia] or Nevada or any other backwoods or way that I have travelled is so rough & devil-may-care as that of the Cassiar gold ways" he wrote into his field journal at the end of this leg of his 1879 excursion.[944]

After leaving LeClaire and his cabin near the headwaters of Defot Creek on or about August 20th, Muir retraced his route down Thibert Creek to Porter Landing, and then south along Dease Lake, past Laketon to Lakehouse, and hence the trail to Telegraph Creek. Along the way, Muir only noted particular incidences of interest such as seeing caribou above Defot Creek, meeting a lively Douglas Squirrel, and passing several groups of traveling Indians heading north. LeClaire had informed Muir that the natives moved into the region during the fall and winter to hunt caribou. According to Muir's description, the natives carried all their belongings with them, including large stores of smoked salmon.[945] For Muir, not much else was particularly noteworthy during the walk back to Telegraph Creek, except, however, for a litany of complaints about the road-houses along the way and an appalling lack of frontier hospitality. "Our sore feet and wearied looks availed not and we had to tramp on, our feet and limbs aching as we philosopized [sic] on man's ingratitude & want of bowels & kind milk" Muir wrote after he and a traveling companion were turned away from a rough log roadhouse 8 miles south of Wards.[946]

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[943] *John Muir Papers,* Journal 73, 33.

[944] Ibid.

[945] Ibid. See also Travels in Alaska, in *EWDB*, 760. This particular observation described the Tahltan seasonal migration pattern that ensured access to year round food sources. After the salmon runs ceased in mid-August, smaller family groups dispersed into the alpine regions to hunt caribou, sheep, goats, bears

Weary and footsore, Muir reached Telegraph Creek around noon, August 23rd, and immediately had lunch. Apparently, there were limits to Muir's legendary frugality with food. After catching a ride downriver in a dugout canoe Muir arrived in Glenora later that afternoon. From hints in his journal, he found the steamer *Gertrude* at dock in Glenora, set to sail for the coast on August 25th.[947]

While in Glenora that evening, Muir's negative impressions of the Cassiar Trail were softened somewhat with journal notes on the beauty of the trees and the profusion of lichens 'grand and telling' in the wild north country. Despite this attempt to capture some of the beauty of the interior, it is telling that Muir's Cassiar Trail experience had not evinced the deep mystical resonance to the landscape that permeated his experiences in the High Sierra. For Muir, the Cassiar area was inundated with the single-minded quest for gold, and the appalling state of the way stations along the Cassiar influenced Muir's general feelings about the area. Much later in life he wrote that the walk into the interior was but a 'side trip', and he had emerged without a 'particle of obscuring gold dust care', effectively separating his experience from those of the gold seekers and glossing over the misery of two hard days on the Cassiar trail to Telegraph Creek.[948]

On the morning of August 24th, Muir began his second ascent of Glenora Mountain. On this day, Muir was alone, and from the moment he set out from Glenora to his return that evening, he moved through experiences of intense enjoyment of the myriad of mountain plant life to a sublime 360-degree panoramic view from Glenora Peak. Muir's experience of Glenora Mountain was the first time during the two trips up

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and marmots during September and October, and then migrated down into the forested valleys to their winter camps in late fall. See also Sylvia Albright, *Tahltan Ethnoarchaeology,* 88.

[946] *John Muir Papers,* Journal 73, 34. Muir made the trip from Dease Lake to Telegraph Creek in two and a half days, a 73 mile walk with only one, barely edible meal each day.

[947] Muir noted that a kind Hebrew passenger aboard the Gertrude had provided the loan of a rain coat for Muir's jaunt up Glenora Mountain on August 25th, so it is possible that Muir booked a berth on the steamer for the night of the 24th and arranged for return passage to Wrangell on the 26th.

[948] John Muir, "Travels in Alaska" in *EWDB*, 761.

the Stikine River that we see the intensity of connection and relationship to wild nature that imbued the wild mysticism of Muir's early High Sierra days. Enshrined in the chapter "Glenora Peak" in *Travels in Alaska*, the entire day was for Muir a cumulative layering of experiences, each special and noteworthy in its own right, but together, culminated in a rich experiential gestalt.

Muir related the multiple facets of the mountain experience in his own unique way. On the mountain, he took the time and effort to record what he saw through detailed pencil drawings and sketches. Muir's journal drawings show a unique mixture of science, aesthetics and pure enjoyment. The actual journal notes were written later, after Muir had come off the mountain. It appears that the experience was so freshly imprinted in memory through the journal drawings that he was able to relive and write about the entire mountain day with exceptional observational power.

To this end, the field journal and his final published work contain long rambling sentences that compress the myriad ways Muir sought to express his deepest resonance with nature – through science, emotion, physical sensation and aesthetics. In particular, Muir's description of the plant life during the ascent combines in one very long paragraph – a whole made up of a myriad of species, each lovingly acknowledged and duly noted as being an integral part of the whole mountain experience. He remarked on the lovely blue-lavender harebell, found at a certain elevation and staying with him to the summit, the plant dwarfing but the lovely bells remaining large, "…lying loose and detached on the ground as if like snow flower crystals…fallen from the sky." Cassiope, bryanthus, dwarf willows, echiverias and achenia, mertensia, anenome, veratrum – all had their turn in the flow of Muir's prose. "Plant people" he called them, mixing his praises of their beauty with scientific names and observations of growth patterns, while revelling in the taste of deep purple huckleberries and blueberries, "…fine feasts for the grouse and ptarmigan and any others of Nature's mountain people."[949]

As evening drew near, he ran down the slopes, "All the world seemed new-born…" he exulted, "…Everything, even the commonest was seen in a new light and was looked at with new interest as if never seen before."[950] In transport, scientist, naturalist and mystic merged. "The plant people seemed glad, as if rejoicing with me…every feature of the peak and its travelled boulders seemed to know what I had been about and depth of my joy, as if they could read faces."[951] Muir's use of the term plant 'people' was not anthropomorphizing (suggesting that plants had human characteristics) as simply a way of expressing a deeply felt kinship with all things in Creation. It took a day of unobstructed mountain immersion to bring out, once again, the most potent aspect of Muir's resonance and connection with nature. It was, he noted in his journal, "...one of the big immortal days of my life."[952]

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[949] Ibid. 763.

[950] Ibid. 765.

The Stikine Glaciers

Muir's decision to embark on the second trip up the Stikine River was mainly motivated by the desire to study glaciers. During the first trip with Hall Young, he had been amazed at the number and proximity of glaciers along the Stikine River. For Muir, the study of the landscape forming processes of glaciers was a necessity from both a scientific as well as aesthetic perspective, and was the principle reason for his excursion north. The chapter "Exploration of the Stickeen Glaciers" in *Travels in Alaska* describes Muir's experiences on the two glaciers he was able to access, but his field journal provides further clues that illuminate how these experiences added to his understanding of glaciology, and the richness of his ecosophy.

On August 25th, Muir sailed with the *Gertrude,* and arranged with Captain Moore to be dropped off that evening on the west shore in proximity to the Dirt Glacier, approximately 95 kilometres downstream from Glenora.[953] The Captain kindly provided the use of a canoe and two Indian paddlers, allowing Muir the option of extended exploration and, if needed, a means of travelling downstream to Buck's station. There was a feeling of contained expectation in Muir's field notes as he described the clear night sky and nearness of the mountains, and close at hand, the sound of torrential water flowing from the glacier. With his Indian companions snoring added to the deep night mix, Muir only managed two hours of sleep before rising and heading for the toe of the glacier.

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[951] Ibid.

[952] *John Muir Papers,* Journal 73, 47.

[953] John Muir, "Travels in Alaska" in *EWDB,* 814. Muir used the name 'Dirt Glacier', but in his field journal, he referred to it as the 'Toyotte', a name of Tlingit origin which may have been used by local people. Today, the Dirt (Toyotte) Glacier is officially called the Flood Glacier, marking its propensity to release sudden flood events that were infamous along the lower Stikine River. Muir later writes that he had named this Stikine River glacier after his friend, Toyatte, the experienced Tlingit mariner who accompanied him and Hall Young on their explorations of the Alaskan coast later in the fall of 1879. That Muir named this glacier, the first one he had extended time to explore, marks the high regard and respect he had for the Tlingit elder.

After a struggle with devil's club, steep cliffs and meltwater torrents, Muir greeted the sunrise from the broad and nearly level surface of the Dirt Glacier. Although Muir had managed a cursory introduction to a glacier during the aborted Chilcat expedition, it was on the Dirt Glacier that he finally had his first opportunity for prolonged, direct observation of a massive active northern glacier – a wilderness first in the life of John Muir.

In his field journal, a series of pencil sketches indicate the focus of Muir's interest during his day on the Dirt Glacier. These illustrations were the only field record he made while on the glacier. Great sweeping vistas with grand mountains, extensive glaciers and yosemetic-type rock pinnacles were rendered on the pages with care. Scientific and aesthetic observations, such as the movement patterns of dust and debris along the lines of air currents flowing over the glaciers, and the swirling lines of an ice hall within the glacier were given whole pages within the journal. One particularly good sketch was drawn from the middle of the Dirt Glacier looking towards its source in steep walled mountain ranges. Another titled "Looking down Toyette Glacier from 4-5 miles above Terminal Moraine" indicates that Muir stopped part way up the glacier to record the view.[954]

The Dirt Glacier field notes appear to have been written later that evening or the next morning. The penciled notes surround not only the sketches Muir made while on the Dirt Glacier but also scenes along the Stikine River downstream of the Dirt Glacier, including an expansive view of the Great Glacier of the Stikine across from Buck's post. With the experience fresh in his mind, and the sketches prompting recollection, the notes offer a more immediate and truer indication of Muir's day on the Dirt Glacier than his rendition of the day in *Travels in Alaska*.[955]

Muir was a renowned mountaineer, his legendary prowess stemming from a lifetime of exploration and mountain climbing accomplishments. Interestingly, his late life version of the trek up the Dirt Glacier discounted the difficulty of travel on a glacier. "I found no difficulty of an extraordinary kind" he wrote in

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[954] *John Muir Papers,* Journal 73, 51.

[955] The notes also present a problem in that many of them are quite indecipherable. What can be read, however, provides an immediate sense of Muir's experience on the Dirt Glacier.

Travels in Alaska, but his field journal tells a different story. The Dirt Glacier, however, provided a first time experience of traveling a significant distance upon an ice river, and contrary to Muir's later accounting of this exploration, it was not easy. In his field notes, Muir noted the depth of the crevasses, and fully recognized the difficulty and peril of glacier exploration, "…the smooth…walls and the hopelessness of ever escaping should one slip in give them a truly terrible appearance and either unnerve one altogether or bring out our completest [sic] powers into action…" he wrote, and added with forthright honesty, "…No practical glacialist [sic] may possibly last long in this life without unremitting vigilance and caution of the most intense ken."[956] In *Travels in Alaska,* Muir downplayed of the difficulty he experienced on the Dirt Glacier, a view that may be attributed to a late-life perspective that encompassed multiple trips to Alaska and exploration of the massive glaciers of Glacier Bay. After all this, a day on the Dirt Glacier may have seemed but a short prelude. Nonetheless, at that time and place, the Dirt Glacier experience was novel, challenging and contributed many other 'firsts' to Muir's experience and understanding of glaciers.

Some of Muir's experiential firsts were simply novel findings, such as his discovery of floating islands of flowers and small shrubs, transplanted onto the surface of the ice by avalanches and eking out a living from the meltwater and transplanted soil. Others contributed fresh insights into glacial facts that Muir already knew, such as the structure of glacier ice as comprised of thin compressed sheets of cumulative snowfalls and how the melding of many side valley tributaries contributed to the main trunk of the great ice-river. Muir also apparently solved the mystery of the sudden Dirt Glacier flood events, a hazard known by all who travelled the Stikine and the cause, according to Muir, undetermined to that point. A diagram in his field journal illustrates how a glacial lake formed in one of the side tributary valleys, effectively dammed by the main trunk of the glacier. Muir posited that the gradual movement of the glacier would on occasion cause a sudden release the lake waters, resulting in a perceptible flood event along the entire downstream extent of the Stikine River.

The grandness of the view from the Dirt Glacier is evident from Muir's numerous sketches, but Yosemite continued to influence the way he viewed the beauty and landscape forming power of the northern glaciers. Sprinkled throughout the pages of his field journal are references to Yosemite – a note on the "snowy & glacier laden Yosemitic mountains", a sketch titled "Sentinel Rock" situated to the north of the glacier, and a comment on "streams larger than the Merced in Yo[semite]."[957] Muir was still looking for 'proof facts' on glacier action, gathering first hand observations to silence his detractors on the Yosemite glacier question, and his comparisons to Yosemite should be seen in this light.

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[956] *John Muir Papers,* Journal 73, 54. The 'Sentinel Rock' that Muir sketched may be Mt. Rufus, a sharp pinnacle north/northwest of the section of the Dirt Glacier Muir explored.

As evening drew near, Muir turned back, returning along the right side of the glacier, and then down to the Stikine river along the right bank of the glacial outflow. The Indians were berry picking, waiting for his return, and as the steamer had already come and gone, they wasted no time boarding the canoe and making the 35 mile trip downstream to Buck's station, arriving by 8 o'clock that evening.

Buck's station was situated directly across from the largest glacier on the Stikine River - the Great Glacier. The Hudson's Bay Company, having for some years intermittently retained Buck Choquette as a trader, addressed correspondence between 1878 to 1880 to Choquette at "Ice Mountain, Stikine River."[958] Here, Alexandre (Buck) Choquette lived with his wife, Georgianna, daughter of Chief Shakes, and their family, doing business with local native people and the ebb and flow of river traffic on the Stikine.

Intrepid trader, savvy jack of all trades, Buck Choquette was a legend along the Stikine River.[959] A French Canadian, he was a veteran of both the California and Caribou gold rushes, and was one of the original group of prospectors to find gold on the Stikine River in 1861 that sparked the first Stikine Gold Rush of 1862. The sand and gravel bars between Telegraph Creek and Shakes Creek were named after some of the 'men of '62', and "Buck's Bar" and "Miller's Bar" became local landmarks.[960] Buck's Bar in particular, the site of Choquette's gold strike, was close to Shakesville, a rough encampment initially set up around 1862 as the terminus of the first steamer traffic.[961] For Muir, Choquette's kind hospitality and advice about the Great Glacier were the extent of his relationship with the colorful trader, but it is interesting that these two characters rubbed shoulders and broke bread without any inkling of the each other's role in Stikine River history.

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[957] *John Muir Papers,* Journal 73, 48-50.

[958] Henry, W. Clark, "Buck Choquette: Stampeder", unpublished manuscript, Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Victoria, B.C., 137.

[959] Ibid, 132. Henry Clark was Buck Choquette's grandson, and wrote "Buck Choquette: Stampeder", a colorful description of a fascinating historical character of the Stikine region. Clark wrote that Buck Choquette, a Hudson Bay Company trader, had to be "…sober, dependable and honest at all times…fluent in Indian dialects along with having some idea of the language of France, Russia and English… and Yankee twang. He was expected to keep confidences like a priest, doctor or lawyer. He was called upon almost daily to calculate credit risks at a glance and to refuse credit without creating an enemy." This among other attributes such as being able to settle disputes, quarrels and even fights made Buck a legend along the Stikine River.

[960] Georgianna Ball, "History of the Cassiar From 1831 to 1866: The Beginning of the Fur Trade Industry in the Cassiar", Grade 5 Resource-Based Outline, prepared for Tahltan School, Telegraph Creek, unpublished, (Victoria: Ball Research, 1984). Ball has researched many of the place names along the Stikine River, but notes that while there is some agreement on the general location of the bars, that they do shift with the river currents.

On the morning of August 27th, Muir woke to a grey day, threatening rain, and still weary from the combined ventures of the Cassiar Trail, Glenora Mountain, and the Dirt Glacier. The Great Glacier of the Stikine, directly across the river from Buck's, banished Muir's fatigue and weather worries. The "…turrets & domes & battlements of ice one above the other ranged on a curve for 6 m[ile]s 300 f[ee]t high, so impressively massive it might suggest the popular name of 'the Ice Mountain'…" he wrote, "….so grand an advertisement in such telling characters, of course I could not rest."[962]

Muir's field journal notes relating his first day exploring the Great Glacier were written the evening of the 28th, and are at first rather chronologically mixed between what he did on the 27th and 28th. As Muir noted, however, the whole Great Glacier environs were on such a grand scale that he had trouble deciding where to begin, not only his actual exploration of the glacier, but also where to start recounting his adventures gathering glacier lessons.[963]

What one can gather is that Choquette ferried Muir across the river on the morning of the 27th, leaving him to complete a reconnaissance of the general landscape around the glacier. Muir made his way south along the front of the glacier and then zigzagged three miles up the western lateral moraine, sometimes on ice, sometimes on rocky headlands that fell steeply to the glacier's edge. Here he enjoyed a view of the upper glacier and got his bearings for what he hoped would be a week, perhaps two of uninterrupted glacial study. The weather, however, was dismal, and with the rain intensifying, Muir retraced his steps to a point directly across from the post, and was picked up by Choquette and ferried back to the relative comfort and hospitality of the trading post.

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[961] Ibid. Georgianna Ball notes that Captain William Moore brought the first miners upriver as far as Shakesville in the steamer the Flying Dutchman, in the summer of 1862.

[962] *John Muir Papers,* Journal 73, 59.

[963] Ibid. 60.

For Muir, the area between the glacier front and the Stikine River was a study in glacial landscape formation. According to Muir's field notes, the most recently formed moraine lay 200 yards from the glacier snout. Between this moraine and the glacier lay a lake, approximately 3.2 kilometres long (two miles), strewn with icebergs, fed by a multiple streams cascading off the glacier front in small musical rills, as well as larger sub-glacier streams. Between the two moraines lay a flat area approximately 328 metres (300 yards) wide full of gravel flats, marshes, pools and thickets of almost impenetrable vegetation. A total of four large glacial outflow creeks crossed the moraines on their way to the Stikine; all of them combined, according to Muir, would have amounted to a small river.[964] Vegetation in this region told the story of plant succession in glacial landscapes. Muir found the oldest moraine nearest the river covered with old spruce and hemlock, but drawing nearer to the glacier front, the landscape became gradually more young and raw, supporting successive stages of alder, willow, berry bushes, and mosses with patches of orchids. Nearing the rawest region in front of the glacier, the vegetation gradually gave way to the bare minimum of pioneer species – lichens, saxifrages, sedges and grasses.[965]

On August 28th, Muir organized a substantial kit (for him), provisioning for at least a week of general exploration of the Great Glacier environs. Hardtack, dried salmon, sugar, tea, a tent of sorts, a pair of blankets and an axe for cutting steps in the ice were provided by Buck Choquette and his wife, Georgianna. Safety concerns from Choquette fell on deaf ears. "That is a mighty dangerous glacier, its all full of dam deep holes and cracks. You have no idea…" warned the trader.[966] "Yes, I have…" answered Muir, "…Never mind me, I am used to caring for myself."[967]

Ferried across the river by Choquette once again, Muir shouldered his load and began what would be a three-day odyssey in dripping wet bush, hardscrabble campsites, and soaking clothing. Muir decided to head north along the terminal moraine closest to the glacier front, with the intention of setting up a base camp at the northern perimetre of the glacier. After staggering along the rough moraine for approximately 3 kilometres (2 miles) Muir encountered an impassable glacial outflow creek. Changing his original intent to set up his main camp at the northern glacial margin, he left his provisions bundle on the moraine, and spent the remainder of the day struggling through thick wet bush in the attempt to find a safe way to cross the creek. Eventually, after cutting down two spruce trees, the second safe enough to serve as a bridge for his excursion the next day, he spent another two hours "struggling like a fly in a strong spider's web" returning to the moraine where he proceeded to set up camp. The difficulty of moving about in the roughness of this new landscape, especially through extravagant coast mountain vegetation, tested even Muir's fortitude.

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[964] Ibid. 60

[965] Ibid. 63.

[966] Ibid. 60.

[967] Ibid.

The day, difficulties aside, had not been without enjoyment, for Muir could find beauty in all things natural. Here once again, we see the merging of Muir's fine aesthetic sense with scientific observation, peppered overall with mountaineering tenacity. The water rills on the glacier face were 'singing in low tones', the icebergs had "light playing on their bright angles and shimmering in their blue caves in ravishing tones of azure."[968] While setting up his makeshift tent in a deluge of cold coastal rain, a massive roar brought him running to the moraine crest to watch the commotion a newly calved iceberg had made in the glacial lake.

The next morning Muir woke to a rain once again, ignored it and pulled on his wet clothing, "glad to know it could not be wetter", and leaving his base camp on the moraine, took only light provisions to facilitate easier exploration along the moraine.[969] He also found an orchid that morning, "…a purple orchid new to me, perhaps a varied form of or separate species of Calypso."[970]

Later, in *Travels in Alaska*, he would state that it was indeed *Calypso Borealis* [Calypso Bulbosa] "the first I had seen on this side of the continent, one of my darlings, worth any amount of hardship…"[971] Muir's initial uncertainty as to whether this little purple flower was actually *Calypso Borealis* may perhaps be attributed to the first Calypso he found in the swamp in Upper Canada, which he noted as being white, a rare occurrence, but possible. Calypso orchids are more commonly rose-purple, which fits Muir's description, but they also generally bloom in spring to early summer, not in late August. Regardless of whether the lovely purple flower was or was not a Calypso orchid, it is interesting that for Muir, this little orchid, so powerful a symbol of God in Nature, he believed he found while he was once again struggling through another Canadian wilderness landscape.

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[968] *John Muir Papers,* Journal 73, 60-1.

[969] Ibid. 64.

[970] Ibid.

[971] Travels in Alaska in *EWDB*, 772.

Muir found his spruce tree bridge, but as he later recounted "crossing the roaring growling torrent on the slim rising and sinking struggling bridge covered with foam was a ticklish job, but I was lucky."[972] Once more he dove into the inter-moraine thicket, struggling through the extravagant growth back to the moraine. The beauty of drenched mosses, clear drops hanging from the huckleberry blooms, and the steady plop of raindrops on the broad leaves of devil's club were all noted with loving detail, "…such exquisite freshness and brightness of green and all so low and silent. It was impossible to conceive of a single particle of dust ever having been afloat in these green deeps, or ever touching a leaf or crown of all these blessed mosses."[973]

Muir followed the moraine to its northern terminus, hard pressed against the steep wall of a forested mountain, and then, at times on the ice, at times on the rough and tumble of the lateral moraine, made his way up the northern edge of the great glacier. Night found him up three miles up valley, and in a camp that left much to be desired. "Never…" he wrote in his journal, "…had I experienced a more hopeless forbidding spot for a camp, on a wet rainy night, I never saw."[974] Somehow, with the help of paper and candle, he was able to light a fire, and finding enough wood nearby, kept the blaze going through the night, and 'steamed' and dozed through the dark hours, without, he noted "…much discomfort." All of this bearable "…In view of the glacial hopes looming ahead."[975]

Field journal notes on what Muir did and where he went on August 30th end soon after this last observation, however, there are clues in the journal's end note fragments, and recollections from two other sources that tell how Muir spent the last day of exploration on the Great Glacier. *Travels in Alaska*, and late life autobiographical reminiscences describe Muir's route and one of his most interesting glacial observations. "I traced the moraine to its northeastern extremity and ascended the glacier for several miles along the left margin; then crossed the glacier at the grand cataract, and down the right side to the River and along the moraine to the point of beginning" he recounted.[976] At a point approximately 3 miles from the terminal moraine, the steep walled mountains constrict on either side of the glacier, creating a "grand cataract two miles wide where the whole majestic flood of the glacier pours like a mighty surging river down a steep declivity in its channel."[977] Here, Muir found a way to climb down under the edge of the glacier as it arched over a hard rock projection, providing a fascinating view of the icefall arching overhead, and a lesson in glacial denudation. These observations, of how glaciers created landscapes through slow, inexorable grinding action, he felt were his greatest discovery.[978]

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[972] *John Muir Papers,* Series III C, Autobiography, File 08432, [ca. 1913-1914].

[973] *John Muir Papers,* Journal 73, 64.

[974] *John Muir Papers,* Journal 73, 64-65.

[975] Ibid, 65.

Although the experience of seeing the magnificent ice cataract flowing over his head had been a highlight, many of Muir's Sierran glacial theories had been clarified and supported during his exploration of both the Dirt and Great Glaciers of the Stikine River. Later in life, Muir recounted key aspects of his glacial studies on the Stikine, including the cross section of moraine deposition, telling the story of successive formations over centuries, and of the formation of kettles in the older sections of the moraine. His observations on the Stikine substantiated his theories of kettle formation he had seen in the old glacial drift of Wisconsin and Minnesota, as well as in the moraines of residual Sierran glaciers.[979] "All sorts of theories have been advanced for the formation of these kettles…and I was glad to be able to set the question at rest, at least as far as I was concerned."[980] Even then, there was still a hint of the old competitiveness of having to prove his theories with professional geologists, as had been the case with the much debated formation of Yosemite. As far as Muir was concerned he *had* found the scientific proof of the formation of kettles at the Great Glacier of the Stikine River.

Muir returned to the riverbank and was duly picked up by Choquette, most probably the evening of August 30th. Resting at the trading post, he took some time to write his glacial observations and reflect on what he had seen. At the end of the journal, he made an observation that underscored his intent to prove his Sierran glacial theories. This particular deduction, taken from direct observations of the Great Glacier was both innovative and astute. He first noted that the margins of the glacier melted at a quicker rate, and because of this, the edges of glacier ice sloped downwards to meet the rocky valley walls. He also noted that the area on the valley wall beside the glacier was devoid of vegetation for approximately 50 feet as a result of the retreating ice, and then did a calculation of the age of the trees above the fifty-foot mark as being not less than two to three hundred years old. From this, he deduced that the glacier could not have decayed more than two to three inches a year. Taking into account the estimated depth of the glaciers as being between 1000 to 3000 feet, he thought the glaciers would most likely exist for another 12,000 to 24,000 years. "Nevertheless..." he then added, "...all of these Alaska glaciers are only fragments, shrunken remnants of their ancient selves."[981] The Great Glacier of the Stikine, and the glacier directly across the river behind Buck's Station had once joined over the river, but these too, Muir later noted, "...were tributaries of the main Stickeen Glacier, which once filed the whole grand canon a hundred and fifty miles long."[982]

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[976] *John Muir Papers,* Series III C, Autobiography, File 08432, [ca. 1913-1914]

[977] John Muir, "Travels in Alaska" in *EWDB*, 773.

[978] Ibid. 773.

[979] *John Muir Papers,* Series III C, Autobiography [ca. 1913-1914].

[980] Ibid.

Substantiating Muir's Yosemite theory was a Canadian wilderness contribution to Muir's personal glacial studies. For Muir, the argument for the primary importance of ancient glaciers in Yosemite's formation required unarguable 'proof facts' for validation by a skeptical scientific community. With the combined study of all the glaciers he had seen and personally explored in the High Sierra, the Alaskan coast, and on the Stikine River, he knew he had personally observed and could prove how the great ancient ice sheets had contributed to the formation of whole landscapes.

At some point in early September, Muir caught a ride in a passing canoe bound for Wrangel. In October, still afire with the need to explore, Muir convinced S. Hall Young to accompany him on a canoe expedition in search of big Alaskan glaciers. Muir and Hall Young, with the knowledge, skill and forbearance of their Tlingit guides, entered and explored Glacier Bay in late October, 1879.[983]

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[981] *John Muir Papers*, Journal 73, 66.

[982] *John Muir Papers*, Series III C, Autobiography [ca.1913-1914].

[983] Julie Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters and Social Imagination*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 154-78. Cruikshank provides a clear account that Muir's entrance and exploration of Glacier Bay was made possible by local Huna Tlingit knowledge of their regional territory.

Muir never returned to the Stikine River and its glaciers. The massive ice rivers and sharp peaks of Glacier Bay so fired his enthusiasm and imagination, that he returned to it in 1880, accompanied once again by Tlingit guides. The Stikine Glaciers, however, remain the first large and active glaciers that Muir explored at length during his first northern excursion.

The Stikine River and Ecosophy M – glacial gospel and the dawn of Creation

It is interesting and instructive that Muir did not appear to realize that he was in Canada during his excursions up the Stikine River. He made note of "all these Alaska glaciers" in reference to the Stikine glaciers, and nowhere in his field notes is there a reference to his being in Canada.[984] Further, articles he wrote for the San Francisco *Daily Evening Bulletin* during the fall and winter months all refer to the Stikine River, the Cassiar gold mines and the Stikine glaciers as being in Alaska.[985] What this perhaps indicates is that Alaska, for Muir, was not so much a place with political boundaries, but rather, a geographical place with a powerful, wondrous landscape suffused with deep mystery. Alaska was as much an idea, even a dream – a place of glaciers and primeval forests, rivers and oceanic archipelagos – a mythological place that drew him north. National boundaries were, in this light, inconsequential.

Muir's expanding understanding and vision of the ancient ice sheets and the part they played, and were still playing in the formation of landscapes was enriched by his excursions up the Stikine River. It was in Alaska and the Stikine River region that this expansion manifested itself in a deeper appreciation of Creation. On September 7th, Muir penned an article titled "Alaska Glaciers. Graphic Description of the Yosemite of the Far Northwest—A Living, Moving Glacier In All Its Sublimity and Grandeur" which was published in the San Francisco *Daily Evening Bulletin* on September 27th, 1879.[986] While in this particular article, Muir notes that his observations are from the Alaskan glacier he explored for an afternoon during the aborted trip to the Chilcats, it is apparent upon reviewing his field notes that he drew from his recent Stikine River glacier experiences to create a composite description. In this article Muir expressed his expansion of glacial vision, and how this infused his views of Creation.

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[984] *John Muir Papers*, Journal 73, 66.

[985] W.F. Kimes and M.B. Kimes, *John Muir: A Reading Bibliography,* 26-7.

[986] Ibid. 26. John Muir, "Alaska Glaciers. Graphic Description of the Yosemite of the Far Northwest—A Living, Moving Glacier In All Its Sublimity and Grandeur. (Correspondence of the Bulletin.) Fort Wrangell, Alaska, Ter., Sept. 7, 1879." San Francisco *Daily Evening Bulletin*, Sept. 27, 1879, p. 1, col. 1.

> Standing here, with facts so fresh and telling and held up so vividly before us, every seeing observer, not to say geologist, must readily apprehend the earth-sculpturing, landscape-making action of flowing ice. And here, too, one easily learns that the world, though made, is yet being made. That this is still the morning of creation. That mountains long conceived, are now being born, brought to light by the glaciers, channels traced for rivers, basins hollowed for lakes. That moraine soil is being ground and outspread for coming plants—coarse bowlders and gravel for the forests—finer meal for grasses and flowers, while the finest, water-bolted portion of the grist, seen hastening far out to sea, is being stored away in the darkness, and builded, particle on particle, cementing and crystallizing, to make the mountains and valley and plains of other, landscapes, which, like fluent, pulsing water, rise and fall, and pass on through the ages in endless rhythm and beauty.[987]

Science, spirituality, beauty – all combined here in a vision of the timeless creation of great landscapes. Here too, is Muir's Humboldtian expansion of vision, the broadening of comprehension and of *feeling* the greatness of sublime all-powerful Nature through ever expanding geographical exploration. In summarizing his own feelings about what he had experienced the summer of 1879, Muir was candid in his October 9th letter to Louie – and wrote a fitting epitaph to the period of time he spent in the wilderness of the Stikine River region of north-western British Columbia.

> It seems every summer my gains from God's wilds grow greater, this last seems the greatest of all. For the first few weeks I was so feverishly excited with the boundless exuberance of the woods & the wilderness of great ice floods, & the manifest scriptures of the ice sheet that modelled the lovely archipelagos along the coast, that I could hardly settle down to the steady labor required in making any sort of truth ones own. But, I'm working now and feel unable to leave the field. Had a most glorious time of it among the Stickeen glaciers.[988]

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[987] Ibid.

[988] *John Muir Papers*, Letter from John Muir to Louie Strentzel, October 9th, 1879, Fort Wrangel, Alaska

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

This study of John Muir in Canada provides an original contribution to Canadian conservation history, exploring the historical, cultural, religious and personal life contexts of his time in Canada, and how Canadian experiences influenced his philosophical worldview and life direction. This study also contributes to contemporary Muir scholarship by exploring Muir's perennial relevance in the discipline of environmental ethics, whether it be a discussion between competing fields of thought (in this case, environmental pragmatism and ecocentricism) or by defining elements of Muir's intuitive and philosophical anticipation (Ecosophy 'M') of radical ecocentricism as articulated by Arne Naess.

In my exploration of Muir's thought, it is apparent that Muir was an early participant and contributor to postmodern discourse within environmental ethics. I must also add, however, that within the deep intuitive nature of Muir's personal ecosophy, he moved past the current postmodern debate – effectively providing a map, or an ontological path on which postmodern culture, society and individuals may find inspiration and instruction in the search for the philosophical foundations of a new age.

Postmodern debate within environmental ethics includes both deconstructive and reconstructive points of discussion in criticism of modernism. Postmodern environmental ethics has been described as being tied to language, in which all aspects of culture may be read as narrative, and that the postmodern project is to deconstruct flawed modernist narratives, and then use these traditional narratives as the foundation to reconstruct these basic stories.[989] The deconstruction of the modern narrative involves the exposure and rejection of perceived flaws in the modernist ideological foundations within the cultural stories of history, democracy, science, technology, religion and objectivity.[990] Affirmative reconstruction within postmodern debate involves using past traditions and cultural/social narratives to some extent, but reconstructs these narratives and advances alternatives to perceived ideological shortcomings of modernism.[991]

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[989] Max Oelschlaeger, "Introduction", in Postmodern Environmental Ethics, (State University of New York Press, Albany, 1995) 6-7.

[990] Ibid. 6-7.

Muir embarked on his own deconstruction of modernity through deep and critical thinking of social and religious mores. In this, he focused on elements of modernity that he felt most impeded humanity's realization of an interconnected relationship with Creation/Nature. Muir deeply questioned the economic paradigm of rampant commercialism and industrialization; the lifestyles disconnected from nature and therefore disconnected from the divine; and religious dogma that bound people to an increasingly legalistic 'hidebound' interpretation of God and Creation. The 'gobble gobble school of economics'; the 'fleshy apathy of lowland lifestyles'; and religious 'hard shells' all received scrutiny and criticism, but they also warranted deep consideration and Muir's thoughtful attempts at affirmative reconstruction.

Muir's affirmative reconstruction involved much of what I have covered in the discussion of Ecosophy 'M' and its anticipation of Naess's articulation of the elements underpinning contemporary Deep Ecology. These elements, while part of our contemporary comprehension of ecology, naturally evolved in Muir's maturing ecosophical worldview, and encompass unity, diversity, interrelationships, interdependency, symbiosis, and the interconnected milieu of organic and non-organic nature. Muir also modeled his own form of postmodern reconstruction through his unique ability to work and think at the dynamic interface between the subjective and objective – between the pursuit of scientific truth and deep intuitive and mystical interconnection with nature that lies at the centre of his ecosophy.

Muir participated, and indeed anticipated postmodern discussion in the field of environmental ethics, and much of his work centred around his intent to bring a deeper and more interconnected vision of nature to the public – his many publications, lectures and personal dialogue with friends and acquaintances all show his work in changing the 'narrative' of Cartesian dualist views of nature. To say, however, that this is the only contribution Muir made is to neglect a central message of his ecosophy – that postmodern 'narrative' deconstruction and reconstruction is not necessarily the only way to find the path to a new 'post' postmodern worldview. Muir's genius is not realized solely through language, strange as that may sound in view of the tremendous impact he has in nature literature. For Muir, language was an imperfect vehicle in communicating the deepest and most profound meaning of divine nature.

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[991] Ibid. 7.

> No amount of word-making will ever make a single soul to *know* these mountains…One day's exposure to mountains is better than carloads of books. See how willingly Nature poses herself upon photographer's plates. No earthy chemicals are so sensitive as those of the human soul. All that is required is exposure, and purity of material. 'The pure in heart shall see God!...[992]

Muir's genius is to *know* the mountains, to go beyond language, beyond postmodernism's deconstruction and reconstruction of cultural 'narrative' – it is to go the very essence of an ontological being in the world, where there is no real separation between the affective and cognitive, the subject and object – it is all a diverse, interconnected, interdependent unity. This is the central message of Ecosophy 'M' and Muir's 'post' postmodern contribution to ecocentric epistemology.

So how does this contribute to our world today? Why does Muir continue to be relevant to ongoing discussion in environmental ethics? Simply, Muir criticized anthropocentricism, and modeled a more appropriate ontology for a world faced with ecocrisis.

Noted Deep Ecology philosopher and peer of Arne Naess, George Sessions has recently criticized the field of environmental ethics for an 'overriding political preoccupation with human concerns such as social justice, democratic institutions, and fear of totalitarianism and fascism" and wonders why the root overriding issue of global ecological crisis is so patently ignored.[993] It also appears that Sessions has placed Deep Ecology separate from 'postmodern' and 'neo-pragmatic' theory because of their anthropocentric fixation on deconstruction and reconstruction of the modern cultural 'narrative' to the exclusion of global ecocrisis. Postmodernists are still, apparently, 'casting doubt on the existence of Nature independent of human language and culture."[994]

The criticism here is once again leveled at anthropocentricism. With the examples of Muir and Naess, we are offered the inspiration of their personal ecosophies for an answer to anthropocentric modernist dualism. Gestalt relations and the recognition of the interconnection and interdependency of all parts and wholes within the milieu (ecosphere) are central to both Muir and Naess, and are born from an intuitive/spiritual/scientific interface. In dealing with our contemporary ecocrisis, a profound realization that humanity is a part of that milieu is a critical prerequisite, not only within environmental ethics debate, but in our ongoing efforts to work on local and global environmental issues.

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[992] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 95.

[993] George Sessions, "Wilderness, Cyborgs, and Our Ecological Future: Reassessing the Deep Ecology Movement", *The Trumpeter*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2006, 122.

[994] Ibid. 126.

Canada's contribution to Muir's life and thought has been addressed in Chapters 3 and 4, with a focus on the historical/biographical context of his life in Canada West, from spring 1864 to early March 1866, and a three-week period he spent in the Stikine region of northwestern British Columbia in 1879.

In Canada West, Muir experienced his first long-term solo botanical ramble, a six-month wilderness immersion that tested his fortitude, resilience to deprivation, and commitment to botanical study. Finding work and a winter home near Meaford on Georgian Bay, Muir's year and a half stay in Trout Hollow became a developmental interlude full of challenging and productive work, strong and abiding relationships with new and old friends, and a test ground for new ideas and emerging values. The historical context of Muir's life in Canada West – the community of Meaford, the Disciples of Christ Church, the pioneer culture, and the beauty and diversity of the Georgian Bay environs with its ferns, flowers and magnificent trees added to the rich milieu of experience.

Muir's friendships with the Trout Hollow 'family' were, for the most part, warm and long-lasting. William H. Trout became the closest and most respected friend for Muir during this time, and a lifetime of correspondence testifies to the mutual regard these two men had for each other. Although Muir learned a great deal about mill mechanics and production from William, the Trout Hollow 'family' did not provide a significant spiritual or intellectual mentor, however, lively debates and at times testy argument did foster in Muir a deeper sense of himself and of the strength of his own evolving ideas and views on science, society, religion and nature. Here he continued his own course of studies in science, and enjoyed discussion of scientific ideas with his Trout Hollow friends.

Underlying Muir's life and work in Trout Hollow was the growing spiritual intimacy between Muir and Jeanne Carr. Nurtured through their exchange of letters, Muir's deepest feelings and insights into God and Nature were expressed, and received by Mrs. Carr with kind acceptance and support. The blossoming of this relationship during Muir's Canada West period was an important element in Muir's growth, for it provided, in part, the spiritual mentorship needed as Muir gradually withdrew from the sectarian dogmatism of the Disciples of Christ Church and embraced his own spiritual relationship with Nature/Creation.

Much has been made of Muir's 'spiritual epiphany' of meeting the beautiful orchid, Calypso, in a wild forest bog in Canada West in the spring of 1864. It is important to note, that within the total context of Muir's Canadian experience, the panentheism embedded in his later (1867) recollection of the Calypso event, although transcendental in true Emersonian form, does not approach the radical implications of a short paragraph Muir wrote Mrs. Carr about pine trees, storm winds, and the complete loss of sense of self. It is also important to note that within the evidence available in the *John Muir Papers* previous to this Canadian wilderness experience there is not an articulation by Muir of this depth of mystic relationship with Nature/Creation. If ever there is a case to be made of the greatest contribution of Canadian wilderness to the early evolution of Muir's ecosophy, it may indeed reside in this tentatively proffered account to a trusted and valued friend.

What Muir related to Mrs. Carr is indeed another Canadian wilderness epiphany, stronger and more mystical in its implications than the Muir's experience with the Calypso orchid. Standing by a majestic pine tree during an Autumn storm, Muir lost complete sense of his own existence and thought himself unworthy to be a leaf on such a tree.[995] The huge pine had 'conversed' and waved its branched 'in signs of worship' with the spirit of the storm – an identification with Nature/Creation that Muir recognized as having *its own way of being.* Muir's loss of sense of self in this experience anticipates Naess's clarification of the continuum of moving from Self-realization (realization of individual self) into Self-realization(the unfolding process of intuition and identification with the total field Milieu).[996]

The pine tree in the Autumn storm is arguably Muir's first tentative expression of what would become a hallmark of his mature ecosophy, and that the experience occurred in Canada indicates how far along Muir moved in the continuum of Self-realization while in the Canadian north woods. Long term immersion in Nature/Creation in Canada West had profound impacts on the formation of his ecosophy that previously has not been well understood.

In 1879, Muir's excursion into northwestern British Columbia provided other notable 'first' experiences. At this point in his life, Muir's ecosophy had become deeper and more refined through the transformative years in Yosemite and the High Sierras. The excursion into the Stikine River country provided for Muir his first long-term immersion experiences with massive northern glaciers, and contributed a great deal to his scientific understanding of glaciology. What can also be seen is, akin to Humboldt's expansion of vision related to expansion of geographical experience, Muir's comprehension of the divine at work in the creation of great landscapes expanded once again during the Stikine River excursions. This was for Muir 'still the morning of Creation' and the grand landscape making process a continuation of 'endless rhythm and beauty.[3]

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[995] *John Muir Papers*, Letter from John Muir to Jeanne Carr, October, 1866.

[996] Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, 9.

The story of Muir in Canada provides both a discussion of the physical, historical and personal context of experience and influence on Muir's life and thought, and an exploration of the nascent beginnings of Muir's personal ecosophy that evolved during his time in Canadian wilderness. The experiences Muir had in Canada influenced his life and thought in myriad ways. Some of these influences were subtle, such as his continued lack of resolution to pressing life direction questions while he was in Canada West. Other influences were more direct, such as gaining practical experience in mill-works and mechanical invention; a vocation that would later provide Muir the means to not only support himself, but finance long-term wilderness immersion during his 1000 mile walk to the Gulf of Mexico, and the halcyon years in the High Sierras of California. More importantly, however, is the Canadian wilderness contribution to the evolution of Ecosophy 'M', and the many experiences and influences that contributed to that life-long process.

Muir's continued relevance to eco-philosophy, and the ongoing debate within postmodern environmental ethics and the work of the Deep Ecology movement has also been addressed in this study. The applicability of Muir's thought to environmental activism continues to be of use today. My personal work as a bioregional activist has drawn heavily from Muir's teachings, and indeed, the exploration of Muir and environmental pragmatism has helped to chart the strategic course of our local watershed group's work for bioregional health and sustainability. Working collaboratively with people of disparate values on an environmentally beneficial project has helped open the doors to a more meaningful dialogue within a traditional resource extraction community. It is possible, as Muir did with his Hetch-Hetchy battle, to work successfully with people of theoretically distinct values positions to a common end, however, when it comes to resolution of major 'crunch-point' environmental issues, one cannot utilize 'situational ethics' practicality without compromising the integrity of deep ecosophical worldviews grounded within the premise of intrinsic value in and of nature.

John Muir had wonderful and life-affirming experiences in Canadian wilderness. Long-term immersion in wild nature; free time to soak up the essence of forests and mountains are hallmarks of both Muir and Naess's personal ecosophies. Reconnection and identification with nature is at the root of the Naess's articulation of the Self-realization process, the "most powerful application of ecosophical thinking to specifically [address] environmental conflicts."[997] For Muir, wilderness immersion was the well-spring, the fountain from which intuitive recognition of the unity in all Nature/Creation flowed, and brought a 'right relationship' between Man and Nature/Creation.

> Brought into right relationships with wilderness, man would see that his appropriation of the Earth's resources beyond his personal needs would only bring imbalance and begat ultimate loss and poverty for all.[998]

Perhaps, in addition to the current ferment of debate within postmodern environmental ethics and the multi-faceted approaches to dealing with environmental issues, we need to follow the example of Naess and Muir, to seek 'right relationship' as one being in our home on planet Earth. "Going to the woods is going home", and going home is a return to what makes us most richly and beautifully human as beings 'in and of the world.'[999]

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[997] Ibid, 11.

[998] Quote from John Muir on full size portrait poster. (Petaluma: Pomegranate Publications, 1990) Photograph courtesy of the Sierra Club.

[999] John Muir, "Our National Parks" in *EWDB*, 498.

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